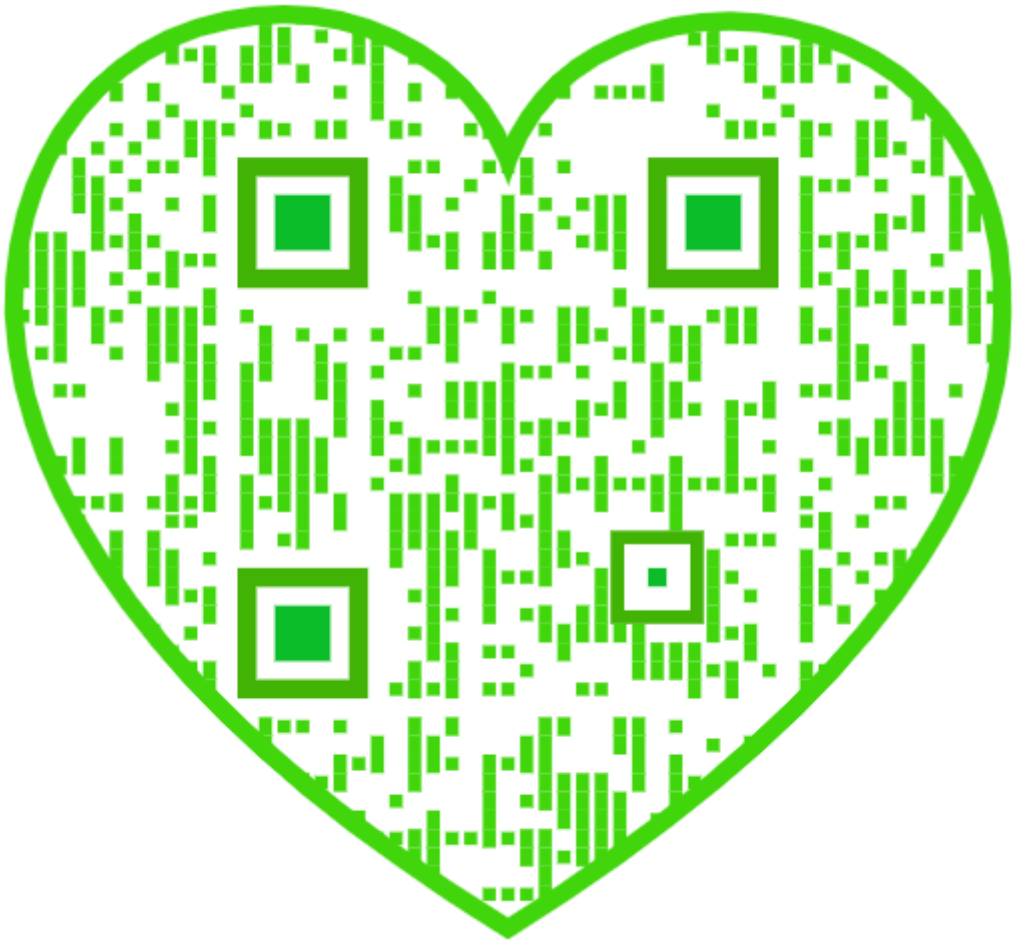

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CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS
(Middle of the XVIth Century)

LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON
OLD FRENCH FURNITURE I

FRENCH FURNITURE
IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND UNDER LOUIS XIII

BY ROGER DE FÉLICE

TRANSLATED BY
F. M. ATKINSON

LONDON MCMXXIII
WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

1028 53

First published, 1923

Printed in Great Britain by
Woods & Sons, Ltd., London, N.1.

INTRODUCTION

A CONSECUTIVE and complete history of French furniture—complete in that it should not leave out the furniture used by the lower middle classes, the artisans and the peasants—remains still to be written; and the four little books of this series are far from claiming to fill such a gap. And yet they will perhaps usefully fill their modest place by giving some hints and ideas, as accurate as possible even though very elementary and simple, to those who appreciate the excellent work wrought by old-time joiners out of walnut trees and cherry trees and oaks.

The present passion for those plain pieces of furniture that six or eight generations of the folk of Lorraine, of Provence, of Gascony or Normandy have polished by use and filled with their humble treasures, has more legitimate foundations than the mere craze for running after a fashion and the astute advertising of dealers: they are practical, their solid strength is proof against the lapse of years—if we dared, we might say their soul is dovetailed to their frames—their material the "*bon bois vif, sec loyal et marchand*," spoken of in every article of the *Statuts et ordonnances des maistres huchiers-menuisiers*, is often most admirable. Their lines and their naive ornamentation,

despite their awkwardness, sometimes possess a real beauty, and nearly always have a most agreeable air. They never hide bad wood badly put together under a pompous raiment of ebony, tortoiseshell and brass, as do the most authentic cabinets by André-Charles Boulle, or under a glossy vermilion lacquering, like the vaguely Chinese tables of certain furniture mongers of to-day. What a splendid lesson they give us, and one of which we stand greatly in need, a lesson of good sense, and honesty, and professional conscience!

The aforesaid statutes and ordinances make no jest of malfeasance and bad workmanship. Let us read over the *Lettres patentes octroyées par Henry, Roy de France et de Pologne,*[1] *à ses chers et bien améz les maistres huchiers-menuisiers de sa ville de Paris.* Here are a few of their prescripts:—

"The said works are to be well and duly made, both ornaments, architecture, assemblage, turnery, carving in the French, antique or modern fashion, the joints well and duly observed, fitted with tenons, pins and mortices . . . the whole of good sound wood, honest and merchantable, under penalty of ten crowns fine and the work to be burned in front of the workman's dwelling."

"Let none make hall sideboards, chamber dressers, cabinets to hold rings and trinkets, chamber tables, service tables, wooden bed for

1 Henry III, in 1580.

covering with velvet, green cloth, or any other colour or material, trestle table or other article of furniture that shall not be well and duly made, and the whole both in assemblage, turnery, carving in the French, antique or modern fashion, marquetry or other new invention . . . the whole of good sound wood, honest and merchantable, under penalty of ten crowns fine and the work to be burned in front of the workman's dwelling."

"Let none make chair or stool (*scabelle* *), whether square, round, octagonal or triangular, *placet*,* low-backed chair called *caquetoùere* . . . coffer legs (*pattes de bahuts*) . . . that shall not be well and duly made and assembled with morticesand tenons."

"Let none make aumries[1] to keep clothes, papers, jewellery, plate . . . save that the feet and cross timbers be of fitting width and thickness."

"Let none make bread cupboard or kneading-trough, hutch to keep bread or meat . . . strong boxes, bureaus, counters, *bancs à couches*, *bancs à dossiers* . . . and other commodities within the province of the said hutcher-joiner's trade, for the use and profit of any and sundry persons of whatever sort, save they be well and duly made and assembled, with good sound wood, honest and merchantable, upon the penalties as hereunder."

This old wording is sufficiently quaint, and

1 Cupboards.

the matter exemplary enough to excuse the length of the quotation.[1] What a contrast they make with the habits that rule in too many workshops of to-day!

"All this is very fine and large," say certain pessimists, "but this furniture makes us think of the legendary steed of Roland: 'it has all possible virtues, but it no longer exists—or if it does, it comes out of the factories of the fakers." Indeed and indeed, fakes abound in this department of antiques as in all the others, and it would hardly be possible otherwise to account for the incredible multiplication of antique shops in the last few years. But the profession does include honest brokers, and among the pieces called old there are genuine antiques. Many have long ago been swept out of sight throughout the whole of France; but even these must be periodically brought into circulation through the agency of bequests and changing fortunes. And whatever anyone says, there is still a goodly muster surviving among the country folk in the depths of the provinces, except perhaps in Normandy, Brittany, and the Arles district, and they abound in the small towns. What provincial middle-class family of any ancientry fails

1 These statutes, recast and confirmed in 1645, governed the body of tradesmen until the suppression of the corporations in 1791, which was one of the causes that brought about the profound decadence into which the art of furniture making fell from that date. Similar statutes were in force in all the provinces; but the artists lodged by the king in the galleries of the Louvre, such as Boulle, and those belonging to the royal manufactories were not amenable to them.

to preserve monumental cupboards, big-bellied commodes, straw armchairs of the eighteenth century, or some "twist-legged" table (*à piliers tors*) of the days of Louis XIV? And how many of these families of folk once rich, or at least once comfortably well-to-do, are to-day faced with the cruel necessity of selling these family relics?

Everybody who served in the field in the late war was able to see for himself in rest billets, no matter where they might be, how many old pieces are still hidden in the farmhouses, in Champagne for instance, and Lorraine, dresser-sideboards and cupboards and other pieces in the Louis XV or Louis XVI style, and not always pieces of rustic make.

If a personal reminiscence may be allowed, the writer remembers how in 1918, when "resting" in the Vitry-le-François region, he was billeted on an old peasant woman who, besides a side-board of the finest patina and a very ordinary Louis XVI commode, whose value she greatly exaggerated, possessed a charming little piece of the Louis XIV period in marquetry of coloured woods, with curving counterforts, which served as a tool-cupboard. The marble top had long since disappeared and been replaced by rough boards that were at that moment covered with a thick carapace of hen's droppings; one of the feet, being worm-eaten, had given place to a stump fixed by two horse-shoe nails; but after a wash and brush up and some discreet restoration it

could have taken its place with honour in the most fastidious collection. And it could have readily been bought for ten francs! Another time, in the heart of the ruins of Esnes, on the Verdun front, did we not see, half consumed in the fire by which a handful of territorials were warming their old bones, a Regency arm-chair leg with exquisite carving?

It goes without saying that middle-class furniture becomes more and more rare in proportion as we look for it from earlier periods, and that we never find peasant pieces before the end of the reign of Louis XIV, for the very excellent reason that in the seventeenth century a family of country labourers had no furniture at all, except for a rude bedstead, which has never been preserved, and one or two coffers devoid of ornamentation, which have also long since disappeared. Of the middle-class furniture of the Louis XIII period, or rather the Louis XIII style—for this style in reality persisted in middle-class furniture for a full century, and in certain provinces, Burgundy, and specially Guyenne and Gascony, even longer—there survive cupboards still in goodly numbers, sideboards, tables, arm-chairs, chairs, and stools.

But if we proceed from the seventeenth to the sixteenth century, it becomes all but impossible to find cupboards, cabinets, coffers, seats, or tables belonging to the period, unless costly and luxurious pieces; many are fakes or outrageously restored; and most of them are

immobilized in museums or in great private collections.

As for the furniture of the Middle Ages, undamaged pieces dating from the fifteenth century are infinitely rare, and those of the preceding centuries are, so to speak, non-existent. We know more about the objects that found a place in the home of an Egyptian under Rameses II than about the furniture of a subject of Saint Louis. Viollet-le-Duc has made a pretence of describing the latter for us; but in these affairs that genial archæologist was better equipped with imagination than erudition. If we omit the stalls in churches, the whole of France does not perhaps contain more than half a dozen pieces of furniture of the thirteenth century—coffers and sacristy cupboards.

It is not hard to guess why sixteenth-century pieces are scarce and those of the Middle Ages almost beyond finding. Wooden objects, if they are made of the best material and perfectly wrought, will withstand a good two or three hundred years of wear and tear, or neglect in a loft, damp, drought, gnawing insects; but it is vastly more unlikely that at the end of four or five centuries they should have held out against the agents of slow destruction and escaped the chances of brutal destruction, fire, war, or changes in taste and increasing demands for comfort. But that is not all. The population of our country was far smaller then than now, and the proportion of those who could own furniture was much lower;

and even they had very little furniture, especially in the Middle Ages, and that little was of a very special kind, in accordance with the manners and habits, so different from ours, that prevailed among our ancestors down to the days of the last Valois kings.

Instability and insecurity—those were two dominant characteristics of the lives of the French people in the Middle Ages. The only comparative quiet was behind thick walls; and again, one had to be always ready for instant flight. The most powerful lords, masters of several castles, had only one single set of furniture, which went with them at every move—no one would venture to leave anything of value behind, no, not though it was in a fortress held by a strong garrison. As for the king himself, he had, in the fourteenth century, a summer plenishing and a winter plenishing; and the one not in use was kept in Paris by his officer of the wardrobe, who had at his disposal four trunks and four chests to keep therein the *courtepointerie** and chamber hangings, and to take them out of Paris at the terms of Easter and All Saints, wherever the sovereign might be.

And so everything that a man owns is transportable, and every piece of furniture, if not a coffer, has to take to pieces or be small enough to go into a coffer. The only things that stay permanently at home are large, rude, unornamented pieces of furniture, such as bedsteads made of common planks barely roughly planed,

tables that are simply boards set on trestles when they are wanted, and plain wooden benches; in short, things that offer no temptation to pillagers or whose loss will be of no moment. On the return of the travellers, there will be brought out from the chests and *bouges* or leather trunks, which have followed on carts, or most frequently, because there are no roads, on the backs of *sommiers*, pack mules and pack horses, the parti-coloured stuffs and the cushions that are to bedeck those rude oaken frames and make them a little more inviting. The structure and the decoration of most of the furniture will largely, as we shall see, depend on these exigencies, and that down to the seventeenth century.

These nomadic ways did in reality, in a certain measure, continue much longer than might be imagined. We read in the inventory of Catherine de Médici's furniture, with reference to the sumptuous town house that Jean Bullant had built for her in the Rue des Deux-Écus and the Rue du Four, that "when she desired to eat there or stay in it, which was very often, she had the necessary furniture brought in, and her officers carried it back after her departure." Louis XIV was the first of our kings to have each of his royal mansions completely furnished; which nevertheless did not prevent his annual comings and goings between Versailles and Fontainebleau from being immense "flittings." In 1649, during the troubles of the Fronde, the court must needs leave Paris precipitately to take

refuge at Saint Germain. An often quoted passage from Mme. de Motteville's Memoirs describes the state of destitution in which the royal family found itself on the first day in that magnificent but empty mansion. "The Queen slept in a little bed that the Cardinal had got out a few days before for that purpose. He had also made provision for the King's needs. . . . The Duchess of Orléans lay one night on straw and Mademoiselle also. All who had followed the Court had the same fate, and in a few hours straw became so dear at Saint Germain that it was not to be found for money."

Since it is practically impossible to find authentic and complete furniture belonging to the Middle Ages, and almost the same may be said of the sixteenth century, and since, on the other hand, the scope of this work only covers current, simple furniture of everyday use, we ought strictly to omit everything earlier than the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, it seems necessary to describe very briefly the evolution of French furniture from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, and to give a little more extended space to the history and description of the much better known furniture of what is called the Renaissance [1] period. It will not be surprising, therefore, to find that nearly half this volume and nearly

1 It is doubtless unnecessary to set forth once more the reasons why this word—whether we are dealing with statues or churches, tapestries or sideboards—is as inaccurate as possible, like the word "gothic," but it is so consecrated by three centuries of use that we must needs use it, however vexing it may be.

two thirds of the illustrations are devoted to the Louis XIII style alone : furniture of this kind—we do not say "of this epoch"—is fairly plentiful, especially in Burgundy, in the old county of Montbéliard, in the valleys of the Garonne and the Dordogne ; it is not yet falling to pieces, far from it ; and as at this moment it is far less in favour, with the public that is satisfied with blindly running after the fashion, than the furniture of the eighteenth century, it is possible to acquire perfectly genuine specimens at reasonable prices.[1]

1 We here tender our thanks to the owners of old pieces and to the keepers of museums, to whose kindness we owe the illustrations in this volume, to the Mother Superior of the Hospice of Beaune, Mesdames Boujut, Dumesnil, Dumoulin, Égan ; Mlle. de Félice ; Mme. Roudier ; Messieurs de Brugière de Belrieu, de Charmasse, Clamageran, Desportes, Durbesson, Fichot, Hubert, Say, Lamiray, Larégnère, Loreilhe, Pascaud, Pauvert, Rigault : the Keepers of the Musée de l'Union centrale des Arts décoratifs, the Musée Lorrain de Nancy, the Musée d'Épinal, and the Musée départemental d' Antiquités de Rouen.

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PART ONE
FURNITURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

PART ONE : FURNITURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Let us first of all confess that we are exceedingly ill informed with regard to the furniture of the Middle Ages. Of what our ancestors used before the thirteenth century we know, in a manner of speaking, nothing at all. For the century of Saint Louis and the two next centuries our sources of information are the miniatures in manuscripts, paintings, which were very rare before the fifteenth century, though sufficiently numerous thereafter, but mostly Flemish, and carvings in stone, wood or ivory; ancient documents, and particularly contemporary accounts and inventories; and lastly, the actual pieces that have survived.

From these diverse sources we may draw only with very great caution. The admirable truthfulness of the Van Eycks and the paintings of their school may inspire us with complete confidence; but the illuminators of the preceding centuries misrepresented a great deal, simplified a great deal, and they were inspired by tradition quite as much as by direct observation, and we can say the same thing of the *imagiers*.

The inventories, so captivating to read and so rich in information of every kind for anyone who can interpret them, give rise to strange blunders. Thus, an improvised archæologist of the last

century, reading that a certain bench was *à coulombes*, quite genuinely thought that pigeons were carved on it, simply because he lacked the knowledge that in the Middle Ages a *coulombe* or *colombe* was any column, stake or upright whatsoever, and in the particular, a bench leg; while another, in commenting upon a text in which it was stated that the queen, in 1316, was followed in her removals by twelve coffers, two for the bed, two for the mattresses, six for the wardrobe, and two "*pour les damoyselles*," thought it meant the trunks for the ladies in waiting, not chests to contain those "*demoiselles à atourner*," which were the dressing tables of the ladies of those days, a kind of round table with central pillar, surmounted with a feminine head of carved and painted wood, on which the *coiffures* were placed.

Furthermore, the lack of precision in their vocabulary is often most embarrassing. What, for example, were *les selles*? A great number of documents inform us: very simple stools with three legs or four. According to certain others, it is clear that they were also little benches "for the feet," and low trestles, on which laundresses set their washing tubs. But here is another text, which speaks of a *selle* "eight feet long, covered with cloth of gold," another of a *selle* on which, at the crowning of the queen, six princesses of the blood were seated. And so on.

Face to face with the pieces still existing in churches, museums, and private collections, the

critical sense must be no less alert. Many are incomplete, many are—*too* complete, many have been denatured by old or recent restoration, over-decorated with more or less avowable aim ; they are now denuded of their paint—how can we know how far they were painted of old? Lastly, and above all, if suspicious specimens are once eliminated, the remainder are so few that it is almost impossible to steer clear of the rock of an arbitrary generalisation.

In any case, here is the essence and the one thing certain—or practically certain. Down to nearly the middle of the fourteenth century there were only carpenters available to work in wood; it is the very utmost if there is a distinction made among them of "*charpentiers de la petite cognée*," who execute work slightly less coarse than the squaring and assembling of beams, joists, puncheons, and roof ties. Joining of wood cut thin was almost unknown to them, and the coffers of the thirteenth century[1] are constructed with thick boards, very rudely cut out, that only hold together thanks to the fine braces of wrought iron that cover their whole surface with scrolls. Their wood was without a doubt painted red, or perhaps covered with hide or painted canvas, on which the ironwork stood out. In the same way also were made the sacristry cupboards of the same epoch.[2]

1 There is one in the Carnavalet Museum, another in the Musée de l'Union centrale des Arts décoratifs.

2 See the Cathedrals of Noyon and Bayeux, and the church of Obazine (Corrèze).

In the fourteenth century woodworkers are in possession of nearly all the tools of the present day, and distinct progress is achieved. We begin to see coffers that, while still continuing to be made simply of planks, are assembled in such a way that they can dispense with iron. If each of their sides is made of two pieces of planking, they are no longer merely glued together with a plain joint, but dovetailed into each other with tongue and groove, and the corners are made with that jointing with triangular pieces, known as "*en queue d'aronde*" or swallow-tail, which everybody is familiar with, since it is always employed to join the front of a drawer to the sides. So now the sides of the coffer are set free for the carved decoration, a decoration *en taille d'épargne*, or cut out of the thickness of the plank: the *coffre de taille* is born with its brothers the *banc de taille* and the *buffet de taille*.[1]

But soon after there comes a change of great importance in another manner. The coffer constructed in the way just described had still very great faults. To be strong its walls had to be very thick, and so, even though it was rid of its iron carapace, it remained exceedingly heavy. If, for fear of its rotting, it was desired to raise it from the ground, people were reduced to the necessity of cutting out the bottom plank in front and back into the shape of feet, and this was far from strong. These thick planks,

1 Carved.

× the bottom one of the two planks of which the front & the back were made.

alternately subjected to cold and to heat, to moisture and dryness, inevitably split. Some workman, or more probably workmen, in their own sphere men of genius no less than the master masons who created vaulting and the flying buttress, invented panelled furniture and woodwork. For full walls of uniform thickness they substituted a system of frames, made up of uprights and horizontal pieces of thick wood, joined with mortice and tenon; the *feuillures*, the inner edges of the frame, were given deep grooves, in which were fitted, so as to have clear play, a panel which could be quite thin, since it was nothing more than a containing shell, in no way contributing to the solid strength of the whole structure. In its slightly loose setting it could expand in wet weather and contract in dry without danger of splitting. A coffer built in this fashion, while it was lighter, was stronger and more solid, qualities of inestimable value for articles that were constantly being transported to and fro.

In fine, the new system of construction was in every way comparable with that which nearly two centuries earlier had transformed architecture. This stout enframement of thin walls, is it not like the buttresses of the wall of a gothic church, between which open the vast windows full of glass? Or, if it is preferred, like the ribs of a gothic vaulting, the strong elastic armature that allows the panels of the vaulting to be as thin as the builder pleases? The art of joinery was

born : this was indeed the moment when the guild of the *huchiers-menuisiers* separated from that of the *charpentiers*.[1]

Handin hand with this technical progress went artistic progress also, for to the logic and impeccable good sense of the artists and craftsmen of the Middle Ages the decoration of any piece of work whatever must spring strictly from its material and the way it was constructed, and must show up that construction and draw strength from it instead of concealing it. Henceforth the front of a coffer, to keep to this primordial piece of furniture, will be full of life, endowed with a certain rhythm by the alternation of its panels, which will now be carved because they are more sheltered, and its uprights, which will be left plain because they are exposed to knocks, to the rubbing of the pack ropes and other dangers. They will act as the "rest" parts in the decoration of the piece. This method of construction brings about a diversity of planes which is decorative in itself and which necessarily entails the use of mouldings.[2] In short, the impression of beauty must spring at the first glance from the actual construction : elegance and purity of shape are to be the essential thing, and the decoration proper, the local decoration, will only come second. In all this the craftsmen in wood are only following, whether consciously or no,

1 Coffers continued, to save labour, to be made of planks joined *à queue d'aronde;* but this method was looked on as rude and coarse.

2 Fig. 1.

the path traced out by the admirable workers in stone when they elaborated the gothic style; whether it be hutcher or image carver or mason, the principles are the same.

When life became something more secure and more sedentary, when all furniture was no longer made so as to be easily transported hither and thither, the solid frame became covered with carving in its turn, as in the little bench of Fig. 7, with its scaly legs; or it became enriched with applied ornament, such as the spindled balusters and half balusters of the much restored coffer reproduced in Fig. 2, which is taken as originally coming from Domrémy.

One of the most salient characteristics of mediæval art is its unity. No style is more homogeneous than the gothic, because at this period religious architecture dominates lay architecture, and architecture reigns over all the other arts. Not only do we find, over and over again, the same decorative motives, but the very same forms—provided the material is not refractory—in jewellery, ivory carving, locksmithery, brasswork, woodwork, as are seen in the work of the masons. The gilded wooden frame of a painted triptych is a miniature façade of a church with triple nave; a reliquary is a miniature chapel; the ornamental openwork frieze of an ivory comb or the pierced iron brace of a buffet is a reduced copy of some flamboyant balustrade of a triforium or a roof gutter. In the same way all the elements of a coffer of the time of

Charles V, a buffet or *chaire** made under Louis XI, are borrowed from contemporary architecture.

The Cluny Museum has a very fine fourteenth century oak coffer, the façade of which is all carved work, and is made up of six arcades, which are completely and exactly in all details windows *en tiers-point* of that rather dry style which tradition insists on calling *gothique rayonnant.* Each is subdivided by a vertical mullion into two secondary arcades with the arch *à redents*, the whole forming twelve frames, in which are statuettes of the twelve peers of France armed and holding their shields. The *écoinçons* separating the points of the large arches are carved with *bestions*[1] and grotesque faces. It is impossible not to be struck with the similarity of this decoration to that of the king's gallery in a cathedral.

In a buffet of the fifteenth century there is not a single detail that is not to be seen in the Church of the Trinity at Vendôme, or in the apse of Saint Séverin in Paris. The uprights are flanked by slender counterforts with flat sides, with ribs, pillars either prismatic or ribbed, the feet of which sink down and penetrate[2] into the talus of the base; the finials are sharp-

1 Small fantastic animals such as winged dragons, basilisks, etc.

2 The penetration of mouldings into one another, of the springing of the arches into the piers, the bases of little columns into the bases of pillars, etc., is one of the characteristics of the "flamboyant" style.

pointed tiny steeples; the *culs-de-lampe* are made of sharp-angled mouldings; the top of the framing of the panels is a "basket-handle" (*anse de panier*) or "bracket"-shaped[1] moulding, which sometimes penetrates into the vertical mouldings of the uprights. All this follows the complicated laws of the "flamboyant" style, which the whole of France was borrowing from her English enemies at the very moment when she was driving them from her shores.

But what is characteristic above all is the carved decoration of the panels. Those which fill the most conspicuous places on furniture, such as the *guichets* or doors of buffets, the façades of coffers, the backs of tall chairs, are almost invariably *taillés à orbe-voies*.[2] In architecture there was opposed to the *clairevoie*, or pierced arcading, the *orbe-voie*[3] or *fenêtre-morte*, an arcading or a simple blind arcade, in which the mullions were replaced by mouldings jutting out from the plain wall, which reproduced the mullions exactly in detail. The joiner-carpenters did not fail to adopt this form of decoration, complicating it at their own caprice and modifying it in a hundred different ways[4]; but always in even the freest interpretation we can perceive the elements of a flamboyant window: in the lower part, the

1 Fig. 6.
2 Also said to be *ouvrés à osteaux*.
3 *Orbe* means blind.
4 Figs. 1, 2, 3, 8, 5 and 6 show panels *à orbevoie*; Fig. 7 displays panels à *claire-voie*.

subdivision into narrow compartments by vertical mullions; above, the flowing network tracery whose curves form *soufflets* (quatrefoils elongated upwards, with pointed lobes) and *mouchettes* (elongated and wavy-outlined ellipses, with internal tracery). Frequently, near the apex, a *gâble*,* bracket-shaped with floriated point, stands out against a new series of vertical mullions[1]: once more, this is an imitation of the fronts of churches.

The combination of *soufflets* and *mouchettes* is supple enough to lend itself to quite complicated designs, such as the large *fleurs-de-lis* seen on the canted corners of the buffet reproduced in Fig. 3. As a general rule, *soufflets* are decorated with four-petalled flowers,[2] and often there is a heraldic shield set in the network of the ribs.[3]

Polychromy accentuated the delicate richness of this decoration, the traceries of the fenestration probably being picked out in gilding against a background of bright colours, which still further increased the resemblance to a stained glass window. Polychromy, and polychromy in very vivid colours, was, it must be borne well in mind, one of the fixed principles of the whole art of the Middle Ages: a coffer was variegated with azure, vermilion and gold, just like the saints of the church porticos and the little ivory Virgins. It was from their painters in ordinary that our

1 Figs. 2, 3 and 6.
2 Figs. 1 and 5.
3 Figs. 2 and 3.

kings ordered their chairs of state. In 1352, Girard d'Orléans, who may perhaps be the author of the portrait of John the Good preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, furnished that unlucky monarch with "*deux chaières ouvrées à orbe-voies à deux endroiz et paintes*," and for his sons, "*chaières ouvrées à orbe-voies à deux endroiz et paintes à leurs armes.*" In 1399, Perrin Balloches, the painter, delivers "*pour Monseigneur Messire Loys de France, deux chaières, c'est assavoir l'une de salle, l'autre de retrait,*[1] *celle de salle painte de fines couleurs.*" Nearly a hundred years after, we have Master Jean Bourdichon, painter to the king, a person of importance (which did not prevent him from painting banners, daises and lances as well as illuminating the queen's book of hours), who furnished Anne of Brittany with "*deux chaires tournissées*[2] *par luy bainctes et toutes dorées.*"

Another motive, everywhere recurring, now on simple pieces,[3] now associated with *orbe-voies* when it is a more costly piece,[4] but in that case relegated to secondary places, is the *parchemin replié* or *serviette.*[5] In its most elementary form this is a relief with bracket profile[6]; but the

1 The *salle* was a great room of state; the *retrait*, a smaller and more intimate chamber, which was used for ordinary occasions.

2 A kind of armchair turning on a pivot.

3 Fig. 4.

4 Figs. 5, 6 and 7.

5 We read also, for instance: "*un banc ouvré à panneaux de draperye.*"

6 Figs. 5 and 6.

parchment or stuff which this ornamentation is supposed to represent may be folded several times on itself, and in many different ways.[1] This motive is always a little dry and poor; and we must confess that in the fifteenth century and the early sixteenth the joiners really did abuse it.

Lastly, vegetable motives are displayed upon the panels, or wind their way along in the hollow moulding of the cornices. The most usual are the vine leaf[2] and the bunch of grapes, more or less conventionalised, and when the carving is very deeply cut, the thistle and the *chou frisé*, mingled or not mingled with real or fantastic beasts. These are, as is well known, the favourite vegetable motives of stone carvers in the period of the flamboyant style. As for the human figure, it is also met with, but only on exceptional pieces of furniture.

The choicest furniture was made of "Irish wood" or oak from the North, the rest was of common oak; but walnut, which is such a beautiful material, not so rough as oak, finer and closer in grain, soft to the tool and capable of the finest polish, was sometimes used, alone or in conjunction with oak, from the fourteenth century onwards. In the decree of approval, issued in 1371 by Messire Hugues Aubricot, Provost of Paris, for "*huchiers, presentement appelés menuisiers*," and confirmed by Parliament in 1382, which is as it were the foundation

1 Figs. 4 and 7.
2 Fig. 3.

charter of the new corporation, there is already a question of "*aumoires à pans de bois de noyer*." A buffet in the Cluny Museum, which is still completely gothic in style, although it has no external braces, is made of oak, but the door panels are of carved walnut.[1]

Already one foreign and exotic wood was known, ebony, then called *ybenus*, of which were made boxes, knife handles, and other little objects; there were, in France in the fourteenth century, small pieces of furniture inlaid with ebony and ivory. In 1317, Queen Jeanne in the Louvre was in possession of "two tables for eating, of wood ornamented with small pieces of ivory and ebony, of which one is in two pieces and a half and folding, and the other in two pieces, upon which table the Queen has her meals." Were these inlaid tables—hinged panels that were unfolded on trestles for meals—imported from the East, like so many other articles "of Damascus work," or did they come from Italy, and were they decorated with that *certosina*, that *travail de Chartreux* lately invented, they say, at Siena? However it might be, it was not French work.

The foregoing is a condensed description of the technique and style of the furniture of the Middle Ages. In fine, in spite of polychromy, and despite the fact that up to the sixteenth century many pieces, the majority without a doubt, were made of plain heavy wood intended

1 It must date from the early years of the sixteenth century

to be continually covered with painted and embroidered stuffs, they were mostly works of mouldings and carving, and never was wood-carving finer; always attacked with admirable boldness, while sometimes it was caressing and full of subtlety, it is above all broad and vigorous, a manner especially proper for work in oak. Have craftsmen of any trade ever been known to possess more complete mastery of it than those who built and carved the miraculous stalls of Amiens Cathedral?

It remains now for us to make a rapid survey of the various kinds of furniture used by the people of the Middle Ages. The list is by no means a long one.

The *coffre* or *huche* is the pre-eminent piece, the ancestor and prototype of the rest. No other takes its place, and it is capable, should need be, of supplanting all the others. The proof of its importance is the name of *huchiers* adopted by all furniture makers. There was a time, and in every period before the seventeenth century there were circles in which it was the only piece in existence besides the bench, and even on occasions took the place of the latter. In sacristies it held the priestly vestments, in the charter-room the archives, in *librairies*[1] the manuscripts not actually chained to the reading desks; in the hall, the chamber and the withdrawing room of nobles or rich burgesses,

1 The library or study (*estude*), the modern *bibliothèque* or *cabinet de travail*.

a long coffer called a *garde-robe* held clothes without the necessity of folding them; a lover might hide in one at a pinch; another contained linen, another the hangings, the loose covers for furniture, the store of stuffs in the piece; yet another—the *coffre à deniers ferré*—held plate, coined money, valuable papers, and this last coffer was put in the chapel if there was one, so that any theft might be aggravated by the guilt of sacrilege; against the bed there stood a long, narrow, low coffer that served as a step to scale the heights of the couch. A piece of stuff, a flat cushion is laid on a coffer—behold a seat! It is too high, of course, but there are little bench stools expressly made to rest the feet on.[1] With a mattress it can be turned into a bed. To the clerk it is a writing table, for the merchant a counter. In the kitchen it takes the name *maie* and bread is kneaded in it, and when baked kept in it. In a flitting it is loaded on to a *cheval bahutier* or put into a cart. Coffers specially meant for travelling were the leather *bouges* and *malles*, *coffres à fest*, which have a double sloped roof like a shrine, and especially the *coffres à bahut*, or *bahuts*, or again *bahuts sommiers*.

What precisely is a *bahut?* Since the middle of the last century an absurd habit has prevailed of giving this name to every form of panelled

1 This explains the existence of those Louis XIII style stools, too low to sit on comfortably, too high for foot rests if one is sitting on an ordinary chair.

furniture, whether ancient or faked up in the ancient fashion, cupboards, under-cupboards, buffets, cabinets, coffers. And the habit is so deeply rooted that this twisted word is flaunted through one of the latest (and best) catalogues of the Louvre.[1] Originally the *bahut* was a supplementary case or box, of no great depth, with domed lid, fitting on to an ordinary coffer, and so fitted when people set out on a journey. In it were put clothes and articles wanted while travelling, so that they could readily be got at without undoing the pack load or opening the coffer. The *coffre à bahut* was first of all a coffer equipped with this accessory, then a travelling coffer with domed top, lastly, any coffer whatever was called a *bahut*, but never any other piece of furniture.[2]

The *coffre ouvré* was carved; the *coffre tout plein* was not; the *coffre vermeil* was sheathed in red leather, others were covered with canvas glued down and painted over.

By way of iron fittings, coffers may have, on the lid, two wrought and pierced braces, called *bastons de fer*; or a single one in the middle, to the end of which is jointed the *moraillon* or hasp, whose *auberon* penetrates into the lock to be caught by the bolt. The hasp and the

1 The catalogue of the Arconati-Visconti Collection, in which the celebrated cupboard attributed to Hugues Sambin is described as a *bahut*.

2 The *arche* or ark seems also to have been, at the outset, a box with domed lid; afterwards it was confounded with the coffer.

palastre or case of the lock are sometimes veritable masterpieces of delicate forging and chasing: strange animals, fenestrations and other architectural motives, foliage, repoussé and cut out in the iron beaten out thin under the hammer (for sheet iron was not yet in existence), and riveted on to the lock case, human figures and even complicated scenes are all carried out with marvellous workmanship, if one considers the rudimentary tools with which the locksmith had to content himself.

The coffer was far from convenient, since in order to open it you were obliged to remove whatever had been placed on its lid, which served as a table, and to get at anything in the bottom all the rest of its contents must needs be taken out. Little by little, therefore, it was driven out from noble and wealthy homes by pieces with doors and drawers; but this only came about very slowly, and the coffer did not wholly disappear until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Nearly all the cupboards dating from the Middle Ages have disappeared. Those for lay use were most frequently part of the *chambrillage*, or wainscoting, of a chamber, and thus were not, strictly speaking, articles of furniture. In Paris there is still to be seen a large cupboard of this kind, still in the very place where it was made. Very interesting and curious, though greatly restored, it is fixed in the wall of the "treasure chamber" of the church of St.

Germain l'Auxerrois.[1] Above a projecting basement ornamented with *serviettes repliées*, which serves as a bench, there are six doors wider than their height, in two rows, with long worked iron braces. The whole is crowned with a pierced cresting. This cupboard dates from the second half of the fifteenth century.

The *buffet* is a very ancient piece of furniture, but it began by being a coffer. Does not Benoît de Sainte-More, the twelfth century poet, in his *Roman de Thèbes* make Polynices the son of Oedipus sit on a buffet? In the sixteenth century it was usually a small cupboard in two parts, whose lower part was doorless; it was called a *buffet à armoire*.[2] But there are also buffets without the cupboard; made simply of superimposed shelves, they are much like dressers (*dressoirs*); and also buffets whose lower part has *guichets*, while the upper part has none; others again, open below, have a cupboard in the middle, and on top a back equipped with one or more shelves or *gradins*, used to display beautiful and costly objects, cups of crystal glass, *aquamaniles* (little basins for washing the hands after meals), *noix d'Inde* (cocoanuts), ivory boxes, goblets made of horn, *bois madré*,[3] or goldsmith's work. This was a noble piece, and

1 With its wainscoted walls, its old beams, its pavement, which is partly ancient, and in spite of a table which is a ridiculous forgery, this little room, worked in over the porch, is one of the most curious and interesting spots in Paris, and one of the most evocative of the past, as the phrase goes.

2 Fig. 3.

3 "Knot" or figured walnut or maple, much sought after.

the number of shelves was strictly regulated according to etiquette; a queen had the right to five shelves, a princess to four, a countess to three, the lady of a knight banneret to two, the wife of a plain noble to one only; a middle class female might not aspire to such a possession at all.

The least uncommon type is built as follows: The ground plan is rectangular, or very frequently has canted corners. Above a base with short feet, or resting directly on the ground (and not even always present), is the open part, the back of which is divided into panels, decorated or plain; the upper part is sometimes supported in front by two pillars, sometimes it has dummy doors; it opens with one or two *guichets* or cupboards, below which runs a carved frieze. The oldest models sometimes have one or two *layettes-coulisses*, or drawers.[1] The ironwork on these buffets, sometimes exceedingly decorative and worked like a jewel, was nailed on over a strip of hide, of cloth or red velvet, which set off its delicate traceries, and their *vertevelles*[2] were of large dimensions and played an important part in the decoration of the piece. The *huchiers* of this great epoch had too much fine taste to disguise this indispensable ironwork.

1 The *layette* was for a long time a box, a little wooden coffer placed in a large coffer, for small valuable objects, papers, etc. If it formed part of the coffer it was a *chaîtron*. The *layette-coulisse* or *layette qui se tire* was invented about 1470, and drawers were known by that name until the end of the seventeenth century.

2 The rings in which the bolts slid.

We have very little to say of the table; in the Middle Ages it was, so to say, a temporary and intermittent piece of furniture. When the hour came for a meal, the master of the house took his seat "*au chef de la table, en sa chaire*," the guests on the long heavy bench that had its permanent place along a wall or in front of the fire-place; the servants put trestles before them, and "set up the table," in other words, laid on these trestles the table properly so called, which might be merely plain deal and made of boards set side by side, spread the cloth, then arranged the trenchers, which took the place of plates, the knives (there were no forks as yet), and the rolls of bread, while others went round with ewers and basins for hand washing; lastly the dishes were brought on. The meal finished and grace said, the cloth was removed, the table taken down, the trestles carried away, and the diners rose. The tables were very narrow and one side left free for serving; if the diners were too many, two tables were set up at right angles to one another, or three arranged in horse-shoe fashion.

As may readily be conceived, the tables exist no longer, nor the trestles, which were of wood or iron or brass, and often folded.

Tables for any other purpose but eating were hardly known, except the *lectrin*, of which we shall speak presently, and the *demoiselle*, whose use we have already described. Coffers and small seats, such as *escabeaux*, *placets*, *selles* and *bassets*, took their place.

The *lectrin* or lectern, and the *pupitre* (desk), the first for reading and the second more especially for writing, but both frequently confounded with one another, were the two articles essential for the *estude* or study. Here may be noted a combination of the two: upon a pillar, carved like the screw of a press and furnished with a very solid base (which might take the form of a book-box), there was mounted a small round table that could be raised or lowered by turning it about; on top of this was a desk with double slope.

The *basset* was a very small square or round table, "made like a stool," but taller.

Down to the end of the fifteenth century beds were either coarse things of carpentry, completely hidden by coverings of stuff, and over which, hung by cords from the roof beams, there was a tester whence curtains fell down, the *dossier* against the wall, and the *gouttières*[1]; or else they were shut beds (*lits clos*), a kind of huge box made of wooden panels, with five walls (the sixth being replaced by curtains), inside which one could find refuge from the draughts that raged about the ill-enclosed dwellings of the olden time. Other beds had only a wall at the back and another along one side, with a slender carven shaft holding up the corner of the tester; of this kind are the pair of beds

1 The *goutlière* was originally a scalloped strip of stuff round the pavilion of a tent, serving to throw off the rain. The same name was then given, by analogy, to this ornament of a bed tester, which was later to be called a *pente*.

belonging to the Musée de l'Union Centrale des Arts décoratifs, and dating from the end of the fifteenth century. Needless to say that these pieces are extraordinarily rare. During the day the curtains were drawn together at the corners of the bed, lifted up on themselves and fastened so as to make a kind of big purse.

There still remains the numerous company of seats. There were three noble seats: the *faudesteuil*, the *banc à dos* (and still more noble, the *banc à ciel*), and the *chaire*.

The *faudesteuil* (the English fold-stool), a remote descendant of the Roman curule chair, is not very well known; it seems to have been the most honorific of the family of seats. The king sat in it, under his dais, in ceremonial circumstances, but he sat in it also to have his head combed and to have his beard trimmed. It had, therefore, a low back. It was generally an X-shaped seat, with curving limbs, fitted with straps of leather and stuffs for seat and back, similar to the seats that are still fashionable in Italy.

Let us imagine the back wall of a long coffer prolonged upwards, and the two sides also, but only by a foot, and we shall have an *archebanc* or coffer-bench. The earliest church stalls were made in this way. These pieces, meant for two uses, were greatly liked by our forefathers, and many old benches have a coffer for seat, with or without a lock and key. We might also have a backed bench that was not a coffer, and the

sides need not then have full walls; it was then a *banc à colombes* or with legs. Benches are sometimes complicated with a *marchepied* along the front (for it is a good thing to protect the feet of the sitters from the cold damp pavements of the halls), and for great persons by a dais, which is usually a half vault.

The *banc*, and more especially the *archebanc*, is weighty and almost unmovable; as we have said, its place is in front of the fire-place. In order to enable one to warm front or back at will, and at meals to sit, as the saying went, "back to the fire, stomach to the table," the ingenious *banc tournis* was invented. This bench has, for its back, a frame that can play in a fan-shaped groove cut in the wall of the two side pieces, so as to shift now to the front now to the rear. But men find themselves more at ease on a bench with a back of a good height and a good solid thickness: they are sheltered thus, not merely from currents of air but from a treacherous stroke from behind.

The *archebanc* may be an integral part of a bed, backed on to the side. It is then a seat by day, and at night it serves as a bed step, after the owner has laid his clothes away in the coffer.

Diminutives of the *banc*, and pretty hard to distinguish from one another, are the *bancelle*, which seems to have been a light bench, with low back and side-pieces, or side-pieces without a back[1]; the *placet*, a name that appears at the

1 Fig. 7.

very end of the Middle Ages; the *escabeau* and the *selle*, which were sometimes made of a long plank, with two planks, by way of feet, more or less cut away and consolidated by means of a cross-piece, sometimes of a square, round, or triangular top, mounted on four or three oblique legs, or else on four or three solid boards put together so as to form a pyramid under the top. Simple as they were, these little seats could be highly decorated with carving. Lastly, the *forme* or *fourme*, which is not necessarily a small *banc*, but a very simple one, without back, without sides, and on four legs. It is this "form" that later on is to become the *banquette*, upholstered and covered with stuff.

Let us go back once more to the common ancestor, the coffer. Suppose it fairly small, almost a cube in shape; raise the two sides moderately and the back wall considerably, up to a height of about six feet; there you have the plan of the *chaire* or *chaière*. This is the seat of the father of the family, the mark of his domestic sovereignty. Often there was only one in a house; its place was at the head of the bed in the room of state. It is a thing of majesty and seldom budges. Is a proof wanted of its dignity? We find it in Olivier de la Marche, the chronicler of Charles the Bold. "The cook within his kitchen shall command, order, and be obeyed, and shall have a *chaière* between the buffet and the fire-place, to sit in and to rest if need is, and the said *chaière* shall be placed in

such a spot as he may see and take cognisance of all that is done in the said kitchen, and shall have in his hand a large wooden ladle, the which to serve him for two ends, the one to taste soup and broth, the other to drive the children out of the kitchen and to beat them if need is."

It is quite natural that this lordly seat should be given the most magnificent habiliments. *Chaires* are carved with *serviettes* (see Fig. 4) and *à orbe-voies* (see Figs. 5 and 6), lightened at the top by an open frieze (see Figs. 4 and 5), the upper part of the back being the part that is most richly wrought, because the lower part is hidden by the *parement* of stuffs and cushions; their uprights have florets for finials; they are painted and gilded. Each has its own *bouge* of leather, made expressly for it, so that it may be taken on journeys. Persons of quality, with rights of high justice and low justice, are empowered to add a dais to the back of their *chaière*.

These seats of the Middle Ages, such as we see them in museums, have a sufficiently repelling air of rude lack of comfort. In very deed, they were never very comfortable, on account of their vertical backs; but they were better than they seem, because their wood was never left bare and naked. A *carreau* or flat cushion of "*camocas* * *d'oultre-mer*," of red leather "wrought in the Moorish fashion," of red sendal * broidered with pearls, of azure *veluyau*, was placed on the seat; two others bestrode the arms; a fourth standing

up against the back "shored up" your loins; or else there was a bear-skin thrown over the chair or a *tapis velu* from Turkey; there were some even, from the fourteenth century, that boasted a permanent garniture nailed on with gilt nails, but this garniture was not stuffed; the material covered a seat of stretched hide, lightly upholstered with hair, or straps fitted with felting.

For the rest, all furniture was decked out with bright-coloured stuffs: the *bancs* were covered with *banquiers*, the forms with *fourmiers*, *escabeaux* and *selles* with flat cushions, buffets with Turkey carpet and *touailles*; just as the walls and even the ceilings disappeared under a profusion of high warp tapestries, of "*tartare vermeil changeant et rayé d'or*," or stuff "*d'azur, brodée à pourcelez* (little pigs) *blancs*," or "*à bestes sauvaiges et à chasteaulx.*"

PART TWO
FURNITURE OF THE RENAISSANCE

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE

DURING the sixteenth century the slow transformation of manners and life continued. Conditions of security were gradually becoming more established—at least until the scourge of the wars of religion raged through the country—wealth increased, the expeditions into Italy brought the rude French to a knowledge of all kinds of ways of making life pleasant, ways they had had no idea of; the taste for luxury spread. Thus the *huchiers* had more and more work on their benches. The working man and the peasant continued to have no furniture, but middle-class people of every grade, always more and more numerous, grew refined, learned a taste for conveniences, even for beautiful things, and without aspiring to lead the life of the gentry, desired to enjoy, at any rate in their own homes, all their ease and comforts. So there came into existence much more plentiful and more varied furniture, more stationary in its use, more delicate in construction. But the change was extremely slow in coming to pass.

We have a very curious document on the *ménage* or equipment of a house as it was towards the end of the reign of François I. This

is a little book—in verse, if you please—of which one Gilles Corrozet, who kept a booksellers shop at the sign of the "Heart and Rose," was both author and publisher.

The title is: *Les Blasons domestiques, contenantz la décoration d'une maison honneste, et du mesnage estant en icelle: Invention ioyeuse, et moderne, 1539. On le vend en la grand salle du Palais, près la Chappelle de Messieurs, en la boutique de Gilles Corrozet, libraire.*

Our good Corrozet was no Ronsard, nor even a Marot; but his verses, for all their remarkable flatness, have yet a very pleasant fragrance of simplicity, and, without being too indulgent, we might even find in them a certain intimate poetry. "You have here, my readers," he tells us in his preface," to recreate your gentle minds, the descriptions of the household goods and other things useful for domestic and familiar affairs, the which I dedicate to you for the purpose of affording you a pastime." Could anything be more amiable? So let us follow Corrozet.

The house he is to bring us through from the cellar

La cave ténébreuse et obscure
Cave dont Bacchus brend la cure

to the garret

Où on met toutes les relicques
Des extencilles domestiques,

is the house he himself would fain possess, the new-fashioned house of a rich burgess.

Noble maison de tous grands biens garnye,
Riche maison de tous meubles fournye.

First of all the courtyard. It is paved with marble; and it is embellished with medallions

Et de figures magnifiques,
Tant de modernes que d'antiques.

This marble, these antique statues, those medallions sculptured on the façade, are the art of Italy, which is now beginning its invasion. Behind the house stretches the garden:

Jardin plein de beauté naïve
Où sont maints berceaux ombrageux,

and through which run "silver rills, full of various fishes," among

. . . le lis, la rose franche,
L'oeillet, et l'aubespine blanche,
La violette humble et petite,
Le doux muguet, la marguerite,
Le romarin, la marjolaine,
Le baulme qui faict bonne allaine
Et aultres odoriférentes. . . .

Let us go within. The house is no longer sullen, folded in upon itself, and only presenting to the street a thick wall as little pierced as possible, like the houses of the Middle Ages. Large windows open in the façade, through which penetrate air and light and gaiety; good-sized rooms, "very clear and well-squared," take the

place of the enormous sombre and chilling halls of the châteaux and seigneurial town mansions of former times, which were divided off into compartments as well as possible by means of tapestries, and the "rat holes and nests," as Henri Estienne called them, of the cramped houses of the middle classes, the bourgeoisie.

Corrozet by no means neglects the kitchen; indeed,

On a beau voir une maison dorée . . .
Si on ne void une bonne cuysine,
Il n'y a rien eu la maison qui plaise.
Car la cuisine esjouit et faict aise
Le corps humain. . . .

However, we will spare our readers of to-day, and mount at once into the "salle et chambre." The "commodités"—what we call comfort—make their appearance here, for

Pour faire un doux marcher
On a embrissé le plancher.

A wooden floor is a great novelty, and what an advance on the uneven, damp and chilly pavement of previous days; but during the whole of the sixteenth century, and even later, it is a rare luxury. Furthermore, the chamber is, "*nattée en toute place*," which means that the walls have been hung with rush matting[1] before hanging the tapestries on them. The tapestries

1 This is not, strictly speaking, a novelty.

Où on voit les ruses et tours
D'armes, de chasses et d'amours,
Les boys, les champs et les fontaines. . . .

Lastly, it is so snug that

. . . le vent rude et divers
N'entre jamais ès froids hyvers.

It is further embellished with pictures; it is "gilded . . . painted . . . with richest colours tinted"; the doors, the ceiling, the window frames are covered with painted and gilded ornament.

Now we come to the furnishings, and our bookseller-poet takes each article and makes its *blason*, an invocation and eulogy at the same time. And first of all the bed,

Beau lict encourtiné de soye,
Pour musser la clarté qui nuict,

whose couch is

. . . ouvrée de menuiserie
D'images et marqueterie.

The *images* are statuettes or bas-reliefs; the *marqueterie* is an Italian novelty which is just beginning to be imitated in France. At the bed-head the noble *chaire* has its due and consecrated place, the *chaire*, "companion of the couch,"

Chaire enlevée à personnages,

on which the craftsman carved

. . . maintes tables d attente *
Fueillages, vignettes, frizures
Et aultres plaisantes figures.

It is a coffer, too, that

Chaire bien fermée et bien close
Où le musq odorant repose
Avec le linge délyé,
Tant souef, fleurant, tant bien plyé.

Then comes the *banc*, "*faict à petits marmouzets*," before which, just as in the full Middle Ages, the table will be brought and set up for meals, "on two trestles borne," an article of furniture that soon will assume such importance, such extravagant richness, but which is still quite modest and subordinate :—

Ainsi que la femme prudente
Est au Mary obédiente,
Tout ainsi la table se jecte
Vers le banc, comme à luy subjecte.

The buffet or *dressouer* is made of "sweet-smelling cypress," it is "low of shape,"

Soustenu de pilliers tournéz,
De feuilles et fleurs bien aornéz ;

it has

Deux guichetz de bonne taille,
Ayant chascun une medaille ;

it is no longer painted, but made of well waxed walnut, for Corrozet insists on the sheen given it from being diligently well kept : this buffet

En clarté le beau mirouer passe,
Pour ce qu'on le tient nectement.

It has none of the features of what we should call a dining-room piece, for it is

. . . *le tabernacle,*
Le lieu secret et habitacle
Où sont les beaux joyeux et bagues.[1]

In short, it plays the part that is soon to belong to the cabinet. The cabinet does already exist in this "house in Spain," if we may venture the phrase, of Corrozet's, and a vignette in the little book even gives us a portrait of it; but it is as yet only a kind of little coffer shaped like a desk, with compartments, and two little *layettes-coulisses* or drawers; in short, a mere embryo cabinet. It is the feminine piece in this chamber:

Paré de veloux cramoisy,
De drap a'or et de taffetas,

it contains *antiquailles*, antique objects, portraits of "great and little personages," the musk-perfumed gloves of the lady of the house, pomade "to bring back lost colour," her

Eaux de Damas, d'oeillets, de roses,
En fiolles de verre encloses;

her "patenostres cristallines,"[2] her scissors, her mirror, her book of hours.

In the coffer, "smelling sweeter than balm," are shut away "adornments, trimmings, robes."

1 *Bagues*, jewels of every kind, and not rings only.
2 Chaplets with beads of rock crystal.

It is made of "figured wood, yellow as wax . . . . shining and well rubbed."

The lesser seats are *scabelles*, *selles* and *placets*, the first "to sit at table for dinner and supper"; the others more for the ladies' conversation. The *placet* of which Corrozet speaks is a stool with four legs and a fixed tapestry covering. There are no *caquetoires* as yet; they were not invented till thirty years later.

Such were, in 1539, the "*chambre et salle*" of a handsome middle-class house, at one and the same time a bedroom, a reception room, and dining room. In more sumptuous dwellings the *chambre* and the *salle* were separate, the *salle* being reserved for feasts and ceremonial occasions.

Our rhymester goes on to speak of the *retrait*, as to which

Il vaut bien mieux que je me taise,

he assures us, which yet does not prevent him from speaking of it—a little too much, and with no delicacy whatever; we are in the days of Master François Rabelais. Let us refrain from following his example, and confine ourselves to saying that with regard to this particular point of hygiene and cleanliness the sixteenth century was distinctly behind the Middle Ages, as the seventeenth century was to be behind the sixteenth.

Finally, like the good bookseller he is, he does not fail to celebrate as it deserves

La bonne estude, où la philosophie
Son throne tient et là se glorifie,

but in terms that are no less vaguely general than they are enthusiastic, and without giving us any detail on its furniture, which, in any case, would not have included anything particular, as lectern and desk had been long in existence, and special pieces, such as bookcases and bureaus, were not yet known.

In short, more than the third part of the century has passed, and hardly anything has changed in the general aspect of the furniture in a house. Capital differences are already displayed in architecture; but as for the furniture, the only changes to be seen are in the style of ornament and decoration. The only new articles are cabinets, which have made a first and somewhat timid appearance. In technique a novelty has arrived: polychromy is fading out, the cult of shining, polished, well waxed, and well rubbed furniture is becoming prevalent. There is a strong leaning towards the effect of reliefs, the play of lights and shades rather than that of colours; it is the complete triumph of carving, which entails the supremacy of walnut [1] over oak. And as carving is no longer a costly rarity, furniture is less often hidden under many-coloured stuffs.

Lastly, marquetry no longer is seen only on

1 Walnut is a wood "good and kindly to work, to make fine pieces of work, because it is smooth and polished of its own nature."—CHARLES ESTIENNE, *Maison rustique.*

small objects of "curiosity," curios imported from Italy or the East. *Certosina*, with small geometrical motives, has long been dethroned across the mountains by *intarsia*, which pretends to rival painting. But it will take a long, long time to become acclimatised in France. It had been from the days of antiquity a thing essentially Italian; a veneer of some costly material, or imitating a costly material, set on a common material—marble or stucco over rubble in architecture, rare and costly wood on common wood in joinery—our French artists and craftsmen will turn away from it always, or for a very long time. Anne de Beaujeu, her inventory[1] tells us, had a "handsome square table, made with marquetry, on which are several towns painted with inlaid pieces"—but this had been "made in Germany," for the Germans very soon had begun to imitate and even to counterfeit the works of the *intarsiatori* of Florence and Venice. François I had a bedstead with marquetry foliage in mother of pearl, but he had acquired it from a Portuguese merchant, and moreover, it was Indian work, "*du pays d'Indye*." He had in his service a specially appointed *marqueteur*, but his name was Giovanni Michele Pantaleone; much later, in 1576, Henry III's was a certain Hans Kraus, whose name sufficiently indicates his origin. On the other hand, there is frequent mention, in contemporary inventories, of marquetry "in the

1 *i.e.*, 1523

Spanish fashion." It is true that the admirable work in inlaid wood that the Cardinal d'Amboise had made at Gaillon[1] seems to have been carried out by French workmen.

But inlaying of composition, either white or coloured, in the Italian fashion—this process was called white Mauresque—was never to become acclimatised among us; still less reliefs in composition *appliqué* and gilt. Our *huchiers* loved fine homogeneous and sound material too well for that.

The real novelties date from the middle of the century. One of the most important was the transformation of the table, due to the increasing need for luxury and convenience. It is very inconvenient to put down ordinary objects, or the book one may be reading, on a coffer placed against the wall; to leave the whole centre of a large room empty and void becomes impossible as soon as there is any care for an arrangement pleasant to the eye. What can be put in this space, except a table? Once the table is promoted to this dignity, it must be handsome, decorative, important, and soon the Renaissance tables will be all three in perfection. The trestles yield place to a monumental affair of framework, pillars, and feet, upon which the table properly so called is permanently placed in position (*assise*). From the vulgar improvised article it had been, only appearing in the chamber or hall to be hidden under a table cloth, the

1 The remains of these may be seen in the choir at St. Denis.

table became the piece in which decorative richness displayed itself with the greatest abundance and even extravagant excess; you might think it shows some of the airs of a *parvenue*.

The table shares with the cupboard and the cabinet the inheritance of the coffer, which disappears very slowly. The cupboards of the days of Henri II are perhaps the most perfect things created by the sixteenth century, once the tradition of the Middle Ages had been completely abolished. There were some, though not many, large ones, with only two doors; the majority were small, in two sections with four doors, each of the superposed sections forming more or less an independent piece, easy to carry from place to place.

The cabinet, which was not French by birth, enjoyed a great vogue, but what is curious is that it never attained a very distinctive personality in France; it remains hard to define. Cabinets were imported from almost everywhere, from Italy, Germany, Flanders, Spain; and often enough were of native make. In several provinces any cupboard was known as a cabinet; in Paris itself we see in Catherine de Medici's mansion "a cabinet of wood painted and gilt, of eight feet high by three feet wide, with four *guichets*"; this is a very narrow cupboard, of strange proportions, but beautifully carved. Another has only "*un pied en quarré*"—a coffer. Another has two feet. At the same period the Duc de

Roannez had one of "walnut wood with marquetry, six feet high, with four *guichets*," and what is an interesting detail, "lined within, in the upper part, with deep crimson velvet and a ribbon of silver silk." This too is a cupboard. The only feature common to all of them is that they were costly and refined pieces, used to lock away, generally in little interior drawers hidden by the doors, every kind of valuable.

It was not cabinets only that came to us from abroad. Genoese furniture, of walnut inlaid with ivory, mother of pearl, lemon or some other light-coloured wood, much sought after from 1550 onwards, included also arm-chairs, "*en tenaille*"[1] and tables; there were tables with marquetry "in the German fashion," others "Indian fashion," or again "Turkish fashion"; the first Florentine tables, "marquetry of divers kinds and colours of marble, set upon their underframes of gilded wood," which were sent to Catherine de Medici by her relative, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, roused general admiration. Under Henri III, there began to arrive from Flanders those large cabinets and small cupboards veneered in ebony, with wavy mouldings,[2] so highly prized by the French of the first half of the seventeenth century, and even bedsteads of ebony inlaid with ivory. The pamphlet entitled *L'Isle des Hermaphrodites*, which so shrewdly

1 X-shaped with curving limbs, the seat and back made of broad leather bands.

2 We shall speak later of this use of ebony.

mocks the effeminate, Italianate and musk-scented manners of Henri III and his favourites, makes them say: "As for wooden furniture, we would have it all gilded, silvered, and marquetry: and the said furniture, and bedsteads in principal, should be, if that be possible, of cedar-wood and rosewood and other sweet-smelling woods, unless it be preferred to make them of ebony and ivory." We have here a vivid picture of the progressive denationalisation, if the barbarous but useful word may be allowed, of costly and luxurious furniture in France, which was to continue in more and more aggravated form until the reaction of the Louis XIV style.

Let us not fail to remark that all this foreign furniture has a polychrome surface decoration, while the French *huchiers*, in all that they turn out, remain faithful to carving in the plain wood; we might even say that they abuse it, carry it too far.

But what passed out of fashion from the end of the reign of François I, and most regrettably, was the handsome ironwork that made such a fine effect on the façades of the buffets and coffers of the mediæval style. Thenceforth hinges are tiny things; there are no more *pentures*,* or if there are, they are on the inside; locks are nailed on inside the doors, inside the coffers, the key-hole plates, essential to prevent the key from damaging the wood, become a mere insignificant surround.

* * * * * *

* the long decorative ends of the hinges

There is not *a* "Renaissance" style in France, but several successive styles overlapping one another throughout the sixteenth century; one can even distinguish several provincial styles, but cautiously and without attempting to be too precise. As in the preceding centuries, it is still architecture that gives the tone, but now it is lay architecture; and to each of the phases of its evolution there corresponds very exactly a period in furniture, for the *huchiers* continue to follow closely and faithfully in the footsteps of the builders of châteaux.

Gothic art was of a surety neither dying nor even in its decline towards the year 1500, when there had just been built, or were actually in the middle of construction, such masterpieces as the châteaux of Plessis-les-Tours, Beaugé, Montpensier, Meillant, the hôtel de Jacques-Cœur at Bourges, the hôtel de Cluny in Paris, the Palais de Justice at Rouen, the hôtel de ville at Compiègne, to quote nothing but lay edifices; the old tree was full of sap when the Italian bough was grafted upon it; and for pure technique, as for abundant decorative fancy, our master masons could have taught something to any Bramante or San Gallo. And thus the real native art made a good defence against the foreign invasion.

Italian ornament, imitated more or less from the antique, introduced itself first, and took its place side by side with the *mouchettes* and the *soufflets*, the cabbage-leaf, aconite, and thistle-leaf, in buildings whose structure remained

purely gothic. This was seen at Solesmes and Amboise under Charles VIII, then under Louis XII at the château of Blois, where the fine gallery of the court alternates on its wholly French pillars fleur-de-lis and heraldic ermines with panels showing *candélabres*,*[1] gadrooned vases, acanthus stems and symmetrical *rinceaux* in the Genoese or Milanese fashion. Among these sculptures some were the work of Italian artists in the service of the French king, others were ordered in Italy itself; others besides, the most free and fanciful of these "*travaux de basse taille*," or bas reliefs, were made by the first French sculptors to be converted to the new manner.

Wood-working, with, as is natural, a few years delay, followed in the same path as work in stone. Then it was that in churches there were built composite chapels or choirs, the lower blind part of which, with panels of *grotesques*,[2] is Italian-antique, while the upper pierced part is of the pure flamboyant style. This latter style, by the nervous elegance of its forms, the vertical or oblique lines soaring gloriously towards the skies, lent itself far better than the Italian manner to the effects of light *claire-voies*, slender finials, airy crestings, to which men were too well accustomed to discard them between one day and the next.[3] A stall of this kind at the beginning

1 See page 51.
2 See page 51.
3 And yet, on the contrary, a stall at Gaillon, gothic to a great extent, ends above in a horizontal entablature.

of the century had, under the seat, a coffer with folded *serviette* carving, then a *dosseret* with *grotesques* copied from a vignette out of a Venetian book, a half-vault dais with a frieze carved with Italian *rinceaux*, and, to crown the whole, a balustrade of the flamboyant style. A *chaire* had, similarly, above a *serviette*-carved coffer a purely Renaissance back, with pilaster uprights and a horizontal cornice enframing a panel covered with motives of the new fashion: candelabrum, cartouche, *medaille*,* *putto*,* pleated ribbons. A frequent combination is that the framework of the article is in the French and the panels in the Italian style.

It must be confessed that these hybrid pieces are often very charming; the two styles are brought together with a fancy and an ingenuous ease that amuse the eye without shocking it by a too violent lack of harmoniousness.

A little later, under François I,[1] a prince much addicted to novelty, architecture becomes still further emancipated. It no longer sets national and Italian elements side by side, it mingles them intimately together; and if the main forms remain, in general, French, many forms

1 It is convenient, and in accordance with tradition, when studying the art of the Renaissance, to divide the sixteenth century into four periods, which are made to correspond with the reigns of Louis XII, François I, Henri II and Henri III. This is very arbitrary, for Henri II reigned only twelve years, and between him and Henri III there interposed the ephemeral François II and Charles IX (who was king longer than his father), or some fifteen years; on the other hand, Henri III died in 1589. But on the whole this division corresponds with a certain reality.

of the details and the whole of the decoration belong to the new style. Master workers still take symmetry somewhat at their ease; the four corners of a château are still rounded off with feudal towers; the general silhouette is, as in the past, picturesque and full of movement, but the calm horizontal line and the right angle take possession of the façade; as yet there is no coldness, but a general calming down, contradicted by the riot of upward shapes that reigns, for example, over the upper parts of Chambord. Against the steep slopes of the slate roofs there still detach themselves the slender chimney stacks and the elegant white dormer-windows; but the gables are now replaced by pointed pediments and crocketed spires by turned finials. The cabbage-leaf is now only for rabbits and the thistle for donkeys; the olive, laurel and acanthus are triumphant. Now arises that strange notion which would have so much astonished the carvers of the thirteenth century capitals—and the great Lorenzo Ghiberti too—that there are noble vegetables, worthy of a place in decoration, and others that are unworthy.

And now, at the same time as the latest of the flamboyant churches, the first Renaissance churches are erected; the typical example is Saint Eustache, a strange edifice of undeniable beauty, strong and fine, French in Italian raiment. Here, as in Azay-le-Rideau, at Blois, or at Chambord, we may see the first serious attacks delivered among us against good sense;

the tall piers of the nave are plastered with pilasters and columns, each with base and capital, placed one above the other.

This "François Ier" art is at bottom truly French, vivid, varied, full of gaiety and fancy, and yet almost always reasonable too, transforming in its own fashion what it borrows from strangers and everywhere showing the most delicate sense of elegance. French artists had not then lost, and were never to lose the *assimilating* genius, in the full meaning of the word, which they had already shown in the end of the fourteenth century, when they elaborated the English "Decorated" style to make of it that completely French thing, the Flamboyant style.

The art of furniture followed in the movement, and we might carry to considerable lengths the parallel between a buffet with canted corners belonging to this period, similar in structure to those made under Louis XI, but not one part of it now showing gothic ornament, and one of those dormers which, at a hundred yards distance, you would swear are flamboyant, but in which there is not a single element not carved in the Italian fashion. A *chaire* still has the stiff and imposing forms that have not changed for a hundred years, but the back, for example, has pilasters for the uprights, and for crown a pediment over a frieze with *canaux** or flutings; its panel and those of the coffer that still forms the seat are decorated with a laureate medallion

and candelabra flanked by dolphins, whose tails end in *rinceaux* of acanthus.

Of course furniture did not all, at a fixed date and *en bloc*, assume this new decoration and aspect; there were very many belated pieces which, in 1540, had not yet resigned themselves wholly to abandon their "folded parchments" and scaly pillars with bases like a prismatic carafe. Also, and this is important, these pieces were never a copy of Italian pieces. Our *huchiers* always created the architecture of their own works; but for ornament they made use of everything that came before their eyes: bas-reliefs of stone and marble, bronze plaques, vignettes in books, engravings, book-bindings. Everything is good to them, and they show the utmost ingenuity in profiting by everything.

Renaissance decoration thenceforth was in possession of all its formulas, what we might call its "vocabulary." That vocabulary is made up of Italian elements, but Frenchified with the same unceremoniousness as was displayed in changing a Bernardino of Brescia, an artist from the other side of the Alps in the king's service as "worker in wood and marquetry of all colours," into *Bernardin de Brissac!* It is now the proper moment to compile a very summary lexicon of this language of ornament.[1]

The pilaster[2] is found almost everywhere. In

1. We will speak a little later of the motives borrowed direct from ancient architecture.

2 Figs. 16 and 17.

its most simple form it is reduced to a narrow vertical panel, framed by a moulding, in the middle decorated with a circle, and at the two ends with two semi-circles, or a lozenge and two triangles. Pay heed to this modest lozenge[1], it will make its way in the world, for it sometimes serves as base to a projection in the shape of a very squat pyramid, which is already the "diamond-point" dear to the joiners of the next century.

In a richer form,[2] "carved with enrichments," as they said, the pilaster, like panels,[3] admits the whole family of ornaments called *grotesques*, or *arabesques*, for the two were and are still commonly confounded. In reality the name of "arabesque" should be reserved for a surface ornamentation, very fully covering the surface, made up of more or less geometrical interweavings of a flat uniform band. A panel or a pilaster of grotesques is a decorative whole, most commonly composed of *rinceaux*, developed symmetrically on both sides of a vertical axis, formed by a candelabrum (a motive figuring a kind of superposition of turned balusters sometimes terminating in a torch flame),[4] a vase[5] or a *vasque*, or by the cord of a *chute*, which proceeds from out of the mouth of a *mascaron*,[6] a cherub's

1 Which is also found carved on panels (Fig. 12).
2 Fig. 16.
3 Figs. 9, 12, 16.
4 Fig. 9, panel on the right (much simplified)
5 Fig. 9, on the left.
6 Fig. 16.

head,[1] or a knot of ribbon.[2] The *rinceaux*, whose slender stems carry acanthus leaves or smallage, very greatly altered in shape, often end in heads of animals[3] or cornucopias.

There enters besides into the composition of grotesques a whole real or fantastic fauna: swans, dolphins,[4] chimæras and monstrous beings of every kind, sphinxes, sirens, griffons, and also the human figure in the shape of male or female torsos, with arms or without, ending in acanthus stems, out of which spring *rinceaux*; and targets[5] in the Italian fashion, rectangular cartouches, broader than their height, called *écriteaux*, even when they are innocent of an inscription, and a crowd of other objects, such as the bobbin and the knife carved above the baluster-shaped supports of the buffet shown in Fig. 16.

The capitals of pilasters are usually a very free rendering of the composite capitals of the Romans; we recognise their upright acanthus-leaf and the volutes.[6]

Other motives are the broad *oval*, or *mirror*, often surrounded with *entrelacs*[7]; the frieze of *entrelacs*,[8] the *cartouche en cuir découpé* and enrolled[9]; the garland of flowers, foliage, and

1 Fig. 12.
2 Fig. 16, in the middle.
3 Fig. 16.
4 Fig. 9.
5 Shields of a particular shape.
6 Fig. 16.
7 Fig. 8.
8 Fig. 8.
9 Fig. 9, the middle.

fruits (then called *fruictage*), often very thin[1]; the *perspective d'architecture*[2]; the *médaille* or medallion, highly characteristic of the period of François I, although it was already in favour under Louis XII; witness the château de Gaillon and the hôtel d'Alluye at Blois. This was a head or bust in profile[3] or full faced[4] of a man, a warrior helmed and bearded, like Hannibal, or of a woman. Certain of these heads, carved almost in alto-relievo, seem to be leaning out of an *œil-de-bœuf*. Their frame is generally round and composed of a wreath of foliage[5] or of a turned moulding,[6] sometimes it is lozenge-shaped.[7] The *coquille*,[8] or shell, most often serves to ornament the top of a niche. The *banderole* turns and folds in a thousand ways; it takes the form of an S,[9] for instance, or becomes incorporated in a *rinceau*.[10] In general, "work with heads and figures" was called *taille*, and all "work of foliage, branching, rosettes" was known as *enrichissement*.

But we must confine ourselves within limits; we should never come to an end of enumerating all the motives adapted so happily to their own

1 Fig. 10, at the top of the left-hand panel.
2 Fig. 16, greatly simplified, and reduced to an arcade whose uprights are figured in perspective.
3 Figs. 25 and 26.
4 Fig. 10.
5 Fig. 25, in this case curiously conventionalised.
6 Fig. 10.
7 Fig. 26.
8 Fig. 21, in the pediment.
9 Fig. 21, on the sides of the pediment.
10 Summit of back of the same chair, Fig. 21.

technique and to French taste by the "*tailleurs de bois*," the wood carvers of this delightful period.

By the end of the reign of François I a style of architecture that was no longer Franco-Italian, but already classical and tainted with the beginning of pedantry, had shown itself in the buildings constructed for the king. Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain are already very different from Chambord and Blois. In the first of these châteaux the oval court has a colonnade and a portico with a double row of pillars, like veneering, in front of a staircase; the dormers are capped with correct Greek pediments, while within the Italians intermingled their stucco and painting all along the sumptuous galleries. At Saint-Germain we see a building that is more bizarre than beautiful cover itself with a flat terrace with a balustrade—a sheer absurdity for our climate.

Some years later, and behold, the architects —no longer *masters of the work*, but architects, a Greek name that has a fine sound—have finally turned their back, alas! for centuries, on the national tradition. With complete imperturbability, burrowing in Vitruvius and pillaging Bramante or Scamozzi, taking as their models the monuments of the two Roman Decadences, they will make correct use of the orders—the five sacred orders. They will see in a column not a support, but a casual ornament to be clapped on top of anything, that may be

redoubled and superimposed with no reason, or that can be magnified to gigantic proportions, and which carries nothing at all. Above their windows they will alternate indefinitely the eternal triangular pediment and the unescapable circular pediment. Incontestable masterpieces, such as that part of the Louvre which was by Pierre Lescot and Jean Goujon, and vigorous reactions, here and there, of the French good sense, do not prevent the fact that cold solemnity, monotonous common-place, tiresomeness, and to speak bluntly, untruthfulness, little by little took possession of the art of building, in which the French race had so triumphantly excelled for the previous four centuries.

And what of furniture? Costly furniture conforms itself, towards the middle of the century, to the new taste, but happily only very approximately.

It is now the structure itself which is profoundly modified. We can recognise, especially in the *armoires*—which then, with cabinets, came to be the fashionable pieces, to the detriment of the *buffets*, while the slow decay of the coffer proceeded—the greater part of the elements of this new architecture, which to-day we call classic. The pilaster continues to be much employed, but it is correctly fluted, set on a base and surmounted by a moulding that copy sufficiently closely the "Tuscan" base and capital. Glance at the buffet with three doors reproduced in Fig. 17, which dates from the end

of the sixteenth century; is it not a reduced copy of the façade of a building, with a covered gallery on the ground floor, two orders of pilasters one above the other, with their entablatures interrupted by consoles all alike? Even in the detail of the carved decoration, do we not discover architectural elements, as cornices, triglyphs, bits of circular pediments? Another very marked characteristic—it is above all a decorative piece; the keyholes are disguised as much as possible, the hinges completely; the drawers are only betrayed by the little iron drop handles, then known as *heurtoirs de layettes*, almost lost among the carving.

The small cupboard in two sections, shown in Fig. 14, so fine, so pretty, and so pure in line, is likewise a miniature building in two stories; its pillars with base and capital almost Tuscan swell in accordance with the rules, are set on stylobates, and in each story carry a kind of entablature with simplified consoles. The *fronton entrecoupé*, triangular or sometimes circular, is almost *de rigueur*. A great number of these cupboards no longer retain it, because it was detachable and easily broken, or else it has been remade; but we can perceive that they were intended to have this crown by the fact that we find the mortises in which the tenons of the pediment were inserted. When one considers it, this *fronton entrecoupé* or *brisé* appears absurd; it has a baroque air and presents a very angular and disagreeably jagged outline;

it was a wretched invention of the decadent architects of Italy, speedily adopted by our own. The break in it is equipped with a very tiny edifice with a niche, intended to shelter a statuette, and crowned in its turn with a pediment either entire or itself also interrupted. And the cornice too may be interrupted as well. We must notice that the pillars have no carrying function; they are like those on châteaux and churches, mere superadded ornaments, whose removal would in no way injure the solidity of these cupboards.

Such a piece of furniture, "*tout d'architecture*," according to the expression in contemporary inventories, would be insufferably pedantic if the joiner had sought to conform to the laws of Vitruvius and Vignole[1]; but he interprets them and suits them to his own notions, pushes the rules aside, changes proportions without scruple, so that his work remains living and personal.

Pilasters and columns are not the only real or apparent supports made use of in this period in furniture making. Balusters, both round and flat, play their part too, but much more as table legs and supports or uprights of panelled furniture; the different species of the genus caryatid, in

1 The age of architectural theory has begun. *L'Architecture, ou art de bien bastir, de Marc Vitruve . . . mis de latin en françois par Jean Martin,* appeared in 1547, with an *Epistre au lecteur* and engravings by Jean Goujon, "student of architecture"; in 1568, the *Règle générale d'Architecture des cinq manières de colonnes . . . par Philibert de l'Orme, conseiller et aulmosnier du Roy, et abbé de Saint-Serge*; in 1570, the *Traité d'Architecture de Palladio*, etc.

which we include, not merely statues bearing weight, but the terminals and the monstrous beings more or less copied from the antique,[1] sphinxes and satyrs, tritons, griffons, chimæras, and all imaginable variations of these typical shapes, as well as their combinations with vegetable forms. The joiners in certain provinces made much greater use than in others of these human and animal figures; which leads us to say a word or two here about the provincial schools of joinery during the second half of the sixteenth century.

In his book, *le Meuble en France au XVI^e siècle*, Bonaffé was the first who, thirty-five years ago, took pains to establish a "geography" of French furniture in the Renaissance period. His zeal as explorer was unbounded, and his method was by no means a bad one, but he wanted to prove too much, and showed himself over precise and categorical; it would be rash to follow him in all his conclusions. It is more prudent to stop, as M. Deshairs did in his excellent chapter of André Michel's great *Histoire de l'art*, at distinguishing two great regions with vague boundaries, one of which would include the county of the Loire, the Ile-de-France, and if necessary Normandy, the other Burgundy and its surrounding districts, southern Champagne, Lyonnais, Franche-Comté.[2]

1 Figs. 18 and 19.

2 We still find, to quote an example, a number of Norman coffers (see Fig. 11) which present certain features commonly

In the first of these two regions taste is finer, more Attic, so to say; the lines of construction are well marked, calm and rhythmic; the structure is more logical, the sense of proportions often is exquisite. The carving is sober, localised, well distributed, contained within very firm enframing lines; the *repos* or plain surfaces enhance its effect. It is usually in very low relief, and its execution is of the most supple refinement. Panels in low relief are universal, with their long, fluid, nude figures, their draperies with a thousand soft folds, carved by artists dominated by the influence of Jean Goujon, while in the architectural part of the piece we can recognise the influence of Pierre Lescot, Jean Bullant and Philibert de l'Orme.

In Burgundy—where the art of stonework produced so many vigorous masterpieces—and what may be called its artistic annexes, carving on furniture developed exuberantly, almost stifling the architecture under its own abundance; everywhere with its accentuated reliefs it overflows the lines of construction. It was Burgundy that saw the triumph, as uprights and supports, of terminals with shafts twined with branchy foliage, and all the wildest monsters, chimæras with enormously long necks, baroque griffins made with a lion's paw, a woman's bosom and an eagle's head. The eye cannot find a square inch of surface to rest upon that is not

ascribed to the Burgundian school; the use of caryatids at the corners the carving of flat arabesques on mouldings.

"carven with enrichments"; not a moulding, not a piece of turned work is left bare without the carver's chisel dealing with it. All this, it must be confessed, falls into a rather tiresome brilliance when the joiner was not a craftsman of the highest merit, and does not shine by the purity of its taste. A small cupboard from the Ile-de-France is like a perfect sonnet by Ronsard; a good buffet of Dijon, carved under Charles IX, is like a page of Rabelais, whose unbridled spirits combine the worst possible taste with genius.

But if their conception is not free from reproach, the execution of the best Burgundian pieces is superb, full of life and feeling, of the keenest energy with unpremeditated turns found with the point of the tool as it moved, a fine freedom in the stroke of the gouge in the substantial walnut. And when these qualities of workmanship are joined with a well thought out composition, with simple lines, as in the most perfect productions of the Lyons workmen,[1] the piece then achieves a beauty superior perhaps to that of the most exquisite cupboards of Touraine or Paris, because it is impossible to reproach it with the least touch of chilliness.

Dijon had one industrious *huchier*, Hugues Sambin, "*architecteur et maistre menuisier*,"

1 The student should see, in the Arconati-Visconti room at the Louvre, a walnut Lyons buffet of admirable harmoniousness and elegance, and compare it with its neighbour, a large cupboard in pine, all gilded and painted in polychrome, the richness of whose decoration is all but overpowering, and which probably came from the workshop of Sambin.

designer and engraver of ornaments, all at one and the same time. Unhappily there remains no piece that can with certainty be attributed to him; his only authentic works are the enclosure of the Palais de Justice and a small door, at Dijon. In 1572 he printed at Lyons a collection of thirty-six plates engraved on wood, entitled *Livre de la diversité des Termes dont on use en architecture, reduit en ordre par maistre Hugues Sambin, architecteur en la ville de Dijon.* This series of somewhat clumsy terminals, with shafts overloaded with ornament, had a very great influence in the district, and must have circulated for a long time in the workshops of the joiners. Sambin can be reproached with a certain turgidness of style, but his chisel was endowed with the qualities of expressive and dramatic vigour in the highest degree.

That once said, at the very most we may add that a very bold, almost brutal execution, often inaccurate in its rendering of the human figure, seems to characterise furniture carved in Auvergne; that the southern provinces delighted to carve knightly horsemen on the panels of their cupboards; that Normandy made great use of oak, much more than the other provinces—and we had better stop at that.

The provincial schools were of no long duration, and in the last quarter of the century a real unification of style was observed, due in great measure to the collections of engraved

models that were multiplied and disseminated everywhere. If the best known are those of Jacques Androuet, called Du Cerceau, there were many others, often anonymous. Du Cerceau was not a specialist in wood like Sambin, but a theoretician and practitioner in architecture, a designer and engraver of ornaments for every kind of craft. He published, like so many others, a *Livre de l'Architecture*, a *Petit traité des cinq ordres*, a collection of *Fragmens antiques*, but also plates of ornaments for no special purpose: *Grotesques*, *Cartouches*, *Fleurons*, *Termes*, *Nielles*; and models for various crafts: *Bijoux*, *Serrurerie*, *Orfèvrerie d'église*, *Fonds de coupes*, *Marqueterie*, and lastly *Meubles*. His plates of furniture—buffets, cabinets, tables, beds and benches—do not, it must be confessed, make any very favourable impression; they are both complicated and cold, and most frequently they are impossible to carry out. Still, it would not be just to reproach him either for the complicated nature or the impracticability of his engravings; they are not models intended to be copied exactly as they are, but rather what we should call suggestions, ideas destined, as he himself puts it in one of his dedications, to "awaken the minds" of the craftsmen and not to spare them the trouble of creating; and if the ornaments are always so multifold and complicated, it was because he meant to give in the smallest possible space many motives that could

be used on many pieces of furniture. In the next century the Le Pautres, the Marots and Bérains will have no different conception of their part as designers of ornamentation. Accordingly, it is impossible to find any piece of furniture that is even a simplified realisation of a model by Jacques Androuet; but there was hardly a workshop, from Burgundy to Normandy, and from the Ile-de-France to Languedoc, that escaped his influence.

Among the motives ordinarily carved on the furniture of the second half of the sixteenth century, we must further note the *plume*, an ornament elongated and standing upright, resembling, if you like, a bird's wing feather, but also like a leaf; there might also be seen in it a conventionalisation and impoverishment of the acanthus[1]; the *masque* of a woman standing out against a drapery[2] and decorating the middle of a panel, either plain or broidered with arabesques; the *mufle de lion*, or lion's face, similarly placed; the eagle with outspread wings, holding a garland in his beak; the winged cherub's head,[3] which becomes a design-of-all-work; it adorns the middle of a bare frieze or softens its corners, under those of the cornice it

1 Fig. 13, on the pedestals of the terminals; Fig. 23, on the sidepieces; Fig. 24, on the legs; Fig. 30, on the flat baluster of the back.

2 A *masque* was a human face seen full and offering no grotesque or monstrous features; a *mascaron* was a head showing such features.

3 Fig. 14.

serves to make the capital of a pillar, to ring it round the middle, etc., etc.

Under the melancholy reign of Henri III,[1] France, devastated by her civil wars, saw all her arts undergoing a real crisis; architecture languished, and furniture was incontestably in decay. The carvers' inspiration and vigour were exhausted, they were repeating themselves and growing heavy-handed. Presently sculpture becomes impoverished, and the *huchier* calls on white inlayings (composition, bone, mother-of-pearl) to give him easier and coarser effects of richness; now it disappears completely, and we see those pieces of an amazing dryness, which are nevertheless encumbered with useless and meaningless details, on which long-necked balusters crowd with neither rhyme nor reason, and frail and over-long pillars; again, it grows heavy, becomes flabby and vulgar, in this betraying the Flemish influence which is beginning to make itself felt.

The coming of Henri IV put an end to the wars of religion and thus restored some security to commerce. At once the importation of foreign furniture increased, cabinets from Germany and Flanders, Flemish seats and tables, and soon Spanish also. The charming art of the Renaissance was to prolong a precarious existence up to the end of the Louis XIII period; but it was already stricken to death by the last years of the sixteenth century.

1 1575-1589.

CHAPTER II : THE DIFFERENT ARTICLES OF FURNITURE

One of our good story-tellers of the sixteenth century, Noël du Fail, seigneur de la Hérissaye, a gentleman of Brittany, in his *Discours d'aucuns propos rustiques, facétieux, et de singulière récréation*, describes as follows a *filerie*, or spinning-room, in the Breton fashion : "The girls, with their distaffs on their hips, were spinning, sitting on a raised place upon a *huche*, in long rows" . . . while "Jehan, Robin, or some other gay bachelor, drumming with his feet on a coffer, said little nothings to Jehanne or Margot." So that coffers were still serving as seats, but this was in Brittany; where civilisation was more advanced it was no longer usual; "drumming with the feet" would very speedily have chipped off the carvings in high relief that were then lavished on them by the *huchiers*, and would have knocked away the terminals or caryatids fastened on with much expenditure of glue and dowels.

These very ornate Renaissance *huches*, so large and so heavy, are no longer made so as to be easily transported; they are state pieces; but there are always plenty of *coffres de bahut* for travelling, kept in a *galerie*, a *retrait*, or in the

galetas (the garret). The king of Navarre, Antoine de Bourbon, the father of Henri IV—an orderly gentleman, it seems, and meticulously particular—had ten merely for the "*joyaux et pierreries de son cabinet*"; each had received a name: Abraham, Jacob, Esau, Job, Moses . . . and the boxes they contained were labelled in their turn, the first was *Je crois* . . . the second, *en Dieu* . . . the third, *le Père* . . . the fourth, *tout-puissant* . . . and so on.

The better to show off the fine carved coffers, and so that it might be more conveniently possible to get at what was packed away in them, it became usual to raise them by means of a base or pedestal, the *support de coffre*, or a low table, whose very short legs were carved like lions' paws, and hence they were called *pattes de bahut*.

The way of making them with narrow panels, divided by upright pieces either plain or scantily ornamented,[1] went out of fashion at the end of the reign of François I. Thenceforth coffers were to have in their façade rather a single large carved panel, flanked with two pilasters, engaged balusters or caryatids,[2] or else a large panel between two narrow panels, the façade then presenting four pilasters or caryatides; or two similar panels and three pilaster uprights.[3] In this last case, there seems at first sight hardly any difference between a coffer and a lower or

1 Figs. 8 and 12.
2 Fig. 11.
3 Fig. 10.

upper cupboard, and it has happened that one has been turned into the other.

Coffers of medium or small size, very ornate in more or less Italian style (carving, painting, inlaying, white *moresque*), provided with a rounded lid, and frequently mounted on four lion feet, are old marriage chests, the receptacle for the bride's presents.

We have said that cupboards tended more and more to take the place of coffers; which means that they are infinitely more convenient, and also much more decorative, more *furnishing* (*meublantes*). The most finished type of Renaissance furniture is the small cupboard in two sections, with four *guichets* and pediment *entrecoupé*,[1] which the workshops of the Ile-de-France and Touraine produced under Henri II and Charles IX. The upper part is a little less wide and less deep than the lower; the whole shape is quite architectural. These delicious cupboards most frequently have corner columns on each section, sometimes twin columns; elegant pillars, with proper entasis, with bases and capitals almost exactly in conformity with the Tuscan, Ionic or Corinthian canon. But there are some without pillars, or with pillars on the upper part, and flat uprights on the lower. The one we choose for reproduction (Fig. 14)—one of the gems of the Musée des Arts décoratifs—is of the most refined artistry, and in proportions absolutely right. It might perhaps be reproached with a

1 Fig. 14.

semblance of clumsiness in the figures of naked goddesses that adorn the doors. These doors are much wider than they seem, for they occupy the whole width of the façade, the hinges being pushed back on to the sides, hidden behind the corner pillars. The piece is as though enlivened by the most delicate polychromy; the pillars are turned out of a very dark walnut, all the rest is of light walnut; twenty small plaques of black marble finely veined with white, surrounded with a fillet of lemon wood, are inlaid in the wood in places most judiciously chosen[1]; the pedestals of the lower pillars are decorated with the same lemon-wood fillets; all the carving is gilt, and the gold, deadened by the lapse of time, and half obliterated in places, is of an exquisite softness and quiet; the key plates and the little drop handles of the four drawers are of iron half denuded of gilding.

There were of course other types of cupboards; with two unequal sections, but of more squat porportions[2]; cupboards narrow and high, with two equal sections, each with only one door and no pediment; with two equal sections, broad, with four doors and no pediment; these last are very like two coffers one on top of the other, and that is their actual origin, which is recalled, in the French provinces bordering on Germany,

1 These inlays of foreign material—a wholly Italian fashion—are very debatable in principle; it must be admitted that in this instance the effect is a very happy one.

2 Fig. 13, this one is incomplete, it should have been crowned with a pediment.

by huge hanging iron handles fixed at the sides of the upper section as well as the lower; cupboards in one single section with two doors, which are much rarer; and lastly, those of a complicated and rather irrational architecture[1] which appeared at the end of the century. In general, it is possible to recognise those that never had a pediment[2] by their more highly developed cornice.

As for *aulmoires à quatre estages*, or even three, and those that had ten or more *guichets*, these were of course fixed cupboards, built into the *garde-robe* or clothes closet.

The *buffet* or *dressoir*—the wording of the inventories of the time proves that the two words were synonymous—also takes to itself the most diverse shapes. It is, in fact, a piece of all-work found indiscriminately in the hall, the chamber, the *retrait*, the study, or the kitchen. In principle it is a cupboard in two parts, low, and with no doors in the lower section; by far the great majority are made in this fashion; but others are *buffets sans fenestres pour servir en salle*, or *buffets sans guichets*, a simple superposition of three shelves upheld by pillars or balusters one above the other, the uppermost shelf thickened by a little cornice, the middle one by two drawers, the lower forming the base; a *meuble de montre* only serving to display

1 Figs. 1 and 5.

2 For our vocabulary we may note that pediments were called *fronlispices* or *chapiteaux*.

plate, not to lock it up; others, on the contrary, are entirely closed, with four doors; or else the doors are below and the open part above, but this last arrangement is very rare.

Buffets of the first type might themselves assume very different aspects. The greatest diversity occurs among those belonging to Burgundy, a province in which the sometimes a trifle wild fantasy of the carvers bent the architecture of the piece to their own caprices. The Renaissance buffet ordinarily has a base, sometimes fitted with drawers, resting direct on the ground or on balls,[1] sometimes flattened, sometimes left round, cubes,[2] or lions' paws. From the base rise two, three, or four uprights, which are, according to the degree of richness of the piece, and also its origin, turned balusters with or without carving[3]; pilasters or pillars, either plain or fluted or carved; terminals, chimæra-caryatides. . . . The upper part is often subdivided into two unequal stories by a horizontal moulding of high projection; drawers form the *entre-sol*, so to speak, of the little edifice; above are the doors, two or three in number, according to the width. Certain large Burgundian buffets, without corner uprights, have their upper part supported in the middle by a narrow cupboard, on each side of which chimæras or other large carved motives, like those of tables, act the part

1 Fig. 17.
2 Fig. 16.
3 Fig. 16.

of consoles and redeem the excess of width in the upper part. This is not particularly successful. Finally, the buffet may terminate in a withdrawn cresting, a kind af *dossier* prolonging the back wall, with a shelf on the cornice, or shaped like a circular pediment. A shape commonly found at the very end of the style, and one that was to persist into the seventeenth century, is that of the buffet with the upper part wide, low, and supported by two heavy balusters of carafe-shape.[1]

Some one may perhaps be surprised not to find the *credence* in this enumeration. This word, like *bahut*, has for now nearly a century had a quite undeserved good fortune. Is it considered more elegant than *buffet*? That was the opinion of the fops of the days of Henri III, who brought it into fashion because it was Italian. It was then gradually forgotten; nevertheless Furetière, at the end of the seventeenth century, included it in his dictionary, but assigned it its proper meaning: "a *buffet* set up (*qu'on dresse*) in the houses of the gentry, on which is placed all their silver plate, on show, when they are at table." It was not, properly speaking, a true piece of furniture, but a temporary structure of shelves made of simple boards, altogether hidden under cloths, to display plate on days of "ceremonious dinners." In Basse-Provence alone—which is explained by the nearness of Italy—the word never ceased to

1 Fig. 39.

be in current use to indicate low buffets of the type known as Arlesian.

The cabinet is, like the credence, an Italian thing with an Italian name, but of earlier importation. The "*cabinet-pièce*" and the "*cabinet-meuble*" have this in common, that they are relatively of small dimensions, and both of them contain one's costliest and rarest possessions.[1] The smallest *cabinets-meubles*, as we have seen, are a kind of coffer, opening either with two doors or a single flap, which is held on the level by *bastons de fer* or iron rods that pull out, and serves as a writing table; the interior is composed of a certain number of small drawers. Other larger cabinets are coffers with two iron handles, and are placed on trestles or on an under-frame made for the purpose; others are real cupboards in two sections, or buffets; these latter can only be distinguished by actually opening them, for what characterizes them all is the elegance, the preciousness of their interior, and especially their subdivision into a quantity of small drawers, with frequently a *tabernacle* in the middle. Are they part of a widow's furniture? In that case they are ebony outside, and inside done with black velvet with silver galoons and plaques. But they are never, so to say, quite altogether French; made in the fashion of

1 We read in the *Dictionnaire* of Nicot (the *doyen* of French dictionaries was compiled by the gentleman who introduced tobacco into France): "a woman's *cabinet*: all the varieties of ornaments, jewels and trinkets she has to accoutre and preen herself."

Genoa, or Germany, or Florence, they are inlaid with bone, with ivory, with mother-of-pearl; Queen Louise, the wife of Henri III, had one of "lapis and agate, covered with carnation velvet and silver embroidery, with the said lady's initials."

When the table was made to remain permanently in the hall or the chamber, it regularly assumed the following shape: the top, usually with extending pieces, is "*assise*" upon a carved *ceinture*, often this is a torus* or perhaps a quadrantal moulding with gadroons,[1] resting at each end on a substantial fan-shaped support, very ornate, with undulating outline, made of two scrolls or two chimæras back to back; these supports stand up from two *patins* joined by a massive cross-piece that serves as a foot-rest for the diners; these tables are especially meant for meals. The cross-piece carries an arcading with pillars, or a heavy ornamental pierced motive. It is very decorative, but a little clumsy and "loud." If the two ends are by far the most highly ornamented parts, it is because the rest was hidden by the *placets*, *escabelles* and *tabourets*, which were put back under the table between meals, and which were looked upon as its accessories; the phrase ran, "a table with its *escabelles*." . . . These were in turn hidden by a tapestry or carpet, the ends of which hung low over the long sides of the table, but left the two ends of the table clear and showing.

1 Fig. 18.

Smaller tables present a similar arrangement, though simplified[1]; others have as their supports pillars, whose bases rest on a kind of pedestal in the form of a double cross, if there are six pillars,[2] and if eight, on a double cross *potencée* * at its two extremities; this pedestal itself rests on six or eight ball feet.

Other varieties are: the round, square, or octagonal table with big central leg, altogether Italian; the camp table, "placed on a trestle that folds up," and the table that itself folds up[3]; lastly, the special table for games: "*à jeu de dames dessus*" (chess table), and "*à jeu de tables.*"[4]

To sum up then, the table, from 1550 to 1600, is generally more complicated than other pieces of furniture, freer in composition, and above all, more Italian of aspect. The reason is that *huchiers*, where tables were concerned, were without traditions to restrain them and to fight against the influence of the collections of somewhat wild models, such as those of Androuet du Cerceau.

But that was a question of luxurious pieces, and it goes without saying that simpler tables were made when the movable top on trestles went out of fashion even in the homes of modest middle-class folk; they were set on four *piliers*

1 Fig. 19.
2 Fig. 20.
3 Foreshadowing the aspect of the seventeenth century tables, reproduced in Figs. 60 and 61.
4 Trictrac.

tournoyés (legs in the shape of turned columns), joined together at the bottom either by a rectangular frame, or by a stretcher either H-shaped or X-shaped, with or without a centre column; in short, already they were "Louis XIII tables," just as the simple tables of the end of the seventeenth century were still "Louis XIII tables."

Let us add that Renaissance tables are always very high, because the seats of those days are appreciably higher than those of to-day.

The beds of this period are to-day so rare that we have hardly anything to say about them. Their tester was not hung from the ceiling, but carried by four pillars, which were highly ornamented with turnings and carvings,[1] or even replaced by terminals, caryatides, for they were in full view; the curtains, as in the Middle Ages, continued to be pulled back during the day. The *dossier* was always a piece of abundant and complicated decoration. It was only at the very end of the sixteenth century that people began to prefer beds, every part of which, including the pillars, was covered with the most magnificent stuffs.

Let us go on to the seats. The great *banc à dossier* disappeared from private interiors after the reign of François I, at least in its quality as seat of honour; banished from hall and chamber, relegated to the antechamber and the kitchen, it is no longer embellished either with *taille* or *enrichissements*. But its diminutive, the *banc*

1 They were called *colonnes-candelabres*.

with no *dossier*, was very much used to sit down at table, and the *banlit*, or *banc à coucher*, in the shape of the *archebanc*, serving as both coffer and couch,[1] continued its good service, especially in the antechambers, for footmen and chambermaids; the bed clothes quite naturally found their place during the day in the long coffer that served as a seat.

The *chaire*, which under François I preserved its massive build, began in the next reign to grow somewhat lighter. The *dossier*, completely straight, is still always very high, about six feet, and would be exceedingly uncomfortable, with its carving in high relief, if drapings, and especially flat movable cushions,[2] which every sitter could dispose of to his own mind, did not give a certain softness. As many as four cushions were placed on a *chaire*; one to sit on, one for the small of the back,[3] two astride the arms; and in this way, but for the tombstone rectitude of the back, one would not really have been badly seated. On the front, a step, the *estrier*, was often part of the structure of the *chaire*. Sometimes the back was movable; by the help of pivots or hinges it could be lowered forward, and supported on the arms could turn into a bed-side table, uncovering too a little cupboard hollowed out of the wall.

1 Fig. 12.

2 Called *carreaux*.

3 It was almost impossible to lean the shoulders back, because of the ruff or the enormous collar.

It was in the accotoirs or side-pieces that the great monumental thing first became lightened. From full walls they became an open frame with a row of balusters [1]; the arms, freed in this way, were curved, became supple, terminated in a volute or the head of a ram or a lion, and soon people spoke of a "*chaire à bras.*" Next, it was the seat that ceased to be a coffer, through the disappearance of its front wall, then of the other three; the back became lower, and at last was pierced, and side by side with the great *chaire* of traditional architecture, seat of honour and of state, which down to the end of the reign of Henri IV continued to mount guard in its unchanging place by the bed, under the name of *chaire de salle*, there were to be found in the hall and in the chamber several *chaires à bras* capable of being moved about as wanted for conversation or various occupations, which could be grouped near a window, or before the fire, around a gaming table or about the bed for the "*caquets de l'accouchée*" (gossip with the lady in bed). These were called *chaires à femmes*, for the men of the sixteenth century were rude creatures, and had, except they were Henri the Thirds or Saint-Mégrins, practically no care for comfort; the *escabeau* was completely sufficient for them.

Of these *chaires* or *chaises* [2] so lightened,

1 Fig. 21.

2 Called indiscriminately, under Henri III, *chayère*, *chaire*, or *chaise*.

some were made square in plan,[1] and their legs, simple uprights square in section with chamfered arrises,[2] or slender columns with slight entasis and a moulding suggesting base and capital,[3] are joined at the bottom by means of substantial cross-pieces generally put together in the shape of a rectangular frame,[4] sometimes H-shaped,[5] which gives the chair a much more informal aspect. It was long before joiners emancipated their chairs from these low cross-ties. For they always had in mind frequent flittings with all their attendant risks; and furthermore, as long as the earthenware tiles and stone pavements with all their unevennesses had not been replaced by wooden floors, the legs of the chairs were bound to be continually knocking against these rough points, which would speedily have dislocated them but for these strong reinforcements.

The back, if not absolutely upright, was barely sloped at all in the oldest types; it was full, and its panel was most commonly carved with a *médaille*[6]; it was then reduced to a frame and the space occupied by turned balusters,[7] a carved vertical splat, sometimes of the outline of a flat baluster,[8] or, as we shall presently find it, by a stuffed *garniture*. The arms had, from the

1 Figs. 22, 26, 27, 28.
2 Fig. 23.
3 Figs. 22, 24, 26, 28.
4 Figs 22, 27, 28.
5 Figs. 23 and 26.
6 Figs. 22 and 23.
7 Fig. 25.
8 Fig. 27.

very beginning, a sinuous line, more or less accentuated, and terminated in a volute sometimes complete,[1] sometimes hinted,[2] which is both the most graceful shape possible and the one best adapted to the human arm that is to rest on it. These arms were upborne by prolongations of the front legs, baluster turned[3] or already carved into the similitude of reversed consoles, as they were to be for the next two centuries.[4]

Other chairs with arms are trapeze-shaped, the back being much narrower than the front and the arms curved ; others were constructed on a polygonal ground plan—something like an octagon cut in two—with four or six legs[5] and elbowed arms ; this last model, it must be admitted, is very ugly. Besides, another defect common to nearly all these chairs is that their limbs are frail and slender as the legs of insects. We may, last of all, mention *chaises à bras tournantes*, mounted on a pivot supported by a tripod.

Two varieties of chair with regard to which historians of French furniture can hardly agree are the *caquetoire* and the *chaise à vertugadin*.

One thing certain is that the picturesque name of *caquetoire* was given to a light chair, easy to move for the convenience of conversation ; in other words, to the *chaise à femme*. Speaking

1 Figs. 27 and 28.
2 Figs. 22 and 23.
3 Figs. 22 and 27.
4 Fig. 28.
5 Figs. 24 and 25.

of the women of his own time, the humanist Henri Estienne says, in his *Apologie pour Hérodote*, printed in 1566: "It nowise appears that they have their mouths frozen, at any rate I will answer for it on behalf of the ladies of Paris, who could not refrain from calling their chairs *caquetoires*." But of what shape were they? Certain students (Bonnaffé, Molinier) say, following the dictionaries: it was a low-seated chair, with high back and no arms. But it was in the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* that they found this definition, and this belongs to the early eighteenth century; the date is rather a late one for the validity of the authority. A quarter of a century earlier Furetière had written: "a low, convenient chair, that serves for sitting by the fire"; he did not say that it was a chair without arms. Other writers, like Havard and Champeaux, relying on the inventories, think that it was merely the smallest and lightest variety of the *chaise à bras*; and the texts seem to justify them. In a period when it was a rare exception for a chair to be without arms, and the circumstance never was omitted from a description, we find commonly written: "*une petite chaire basse, autrement dicte caquetoire.*" . . . Elsewhere: "*six petites chayres, autrement dit caquetoyres.*" And again: "*trois aultres chaises caquetoirs, semblables aux trois chaises cy-dessus*"; now these last-mentioned are "*à bras, toutes garnyes de velourz noir.*" . . . But, it will be said, the chairs that

are known to-day as *caquetoires*, in the language of amateurs of old furniture, are not low chairs, but the contrary. The difficulty is perhaps only an apparent one; might not a *low chair* (*chaise basse*) mean a *low-backed* chair? One of Havard's passages seems to indicate this: "six large *caquetoires*, with one arm-chair *à haut dossier*." In fact, we know of no armless chairs, with low seat and high back, dating from the sixteenth century; while chairs with arms, low back and high seat, are not very uncommon.

And the *chaises à vertugadin*—farthingale chairs? The same controversies arise over them. The *vertugadin* or *vertugade* (the word is Spanish like the thing itself) was the arrangement of hoops that lined women's skirts, that incredible amplitude and cylindrical shape out of which emerged the inverted cone of the bust, a fashion that lasted in France during the reigns of Henri III and Henri IV, and in Spain much longer. Certain writers believe that the *chaise à vertugadin* was distinguished by a kind of pad that made the back more comfortable; others have ingeniously said that as these voluminous petticoats prevented women from sitting down on a chair with arms, the *chaise à vertugadin* was nothing else than the chair without arms, invented expressly on the appearance of that very ugly fashion. Havard, who is of this opinion, seems to have brought together in his dictionary texts that completely prove it: "Three chairs with arms and back, two forms and

two *chaises à vertugadin*. . . . Nine chairs of gilded walnut, five *à vertugadin* and four with arms. . . . Six *chaises à vertugadin* of painted wood, covered with coarse stitch tapestry, and three chairs with arms," etc., etc. Later, when the word *fauteuil* takes the place of the expression *chaise à bras*, it is the *fauteuil* that is quoted in contradistinction to the *chaise à vertugadin* : "six *chaises à vertugadin* and two *fauteuils*, covered in tapestry." [1]

In the sixteenth century the *fauteuil* is not yet the same thing as the *chaise à bras*; as in the Middle Ages, it is a seat of state, a "*chère brisée*," or folding chair, either in reality or in seeming, but always made *à tenailles*, in other words, X-shaped with curved limbs and low back. A contemporary writer describes its structure very accurately, when he says of a man with hands joined that he has "his fingers interlaced one within the other in the manner of a *chaire brisée*."

Lastly comes the commonalty of seats with neither back nor arms : *escabeau* and *escabelle*, *forme*, *placet*, *basset*, *selle*, *bancelle* and *tabouret*. . . . They resemble one another and are very often confounded ; they hardly undergo any modification from one century to the next. Square, rectangular, round, even triangular, standing on legs or solid boards, they abound everywhere ; no other seats are known for sitting down at a table ; in ordinary circumstances only

1 Inventory dated 1652.

women have seats with backs . . . and yet! Look at the two little pictures of the time of Henri III in the Louvre, both representing a ball at court. The king, the queen and Catherine de Medici are in *faudesteuils*, but there are great ladies, in the most sumptuous toilette, sitting plump and plain on wooden *escabeaux*, to which a minimum of comfort has been added by means of cushions. The race is very hardy and has a strong backbone.

However, as the seventeenth century draws near, we find the number of *sièges garnis* increasing. The Middle Ages, as we have said, were by no means ignorant of them, but they remained very rare down to the period of Charles IX and Henri III; and people were satisfied with movable garnitures, cushions and tapestry. The *tabouret* alone was regularly provided with a stuff, a tapestry, a piece of leather nailed on and covering a layer of hair, flock, or even feathers. The *chaise à bras* and the *chaise à vertugadin*[1] might have their seat and their back also fitted in this way. Certain seats were *garnis* with leather and *couverts* with stuff; on the frame there was stretched a strong piece of bull hide serving as a support (like webbing or straps also) for the stuffing, which was covered with a stuff.

The woven fabrics for covering chairs were matched with the *garniment* of the bed; they were velvets either plain or figured, damasks,

1 Figs. 26, 28, and 29.

embellished or not with embroideries, *appliqués*, or enframings in gold or silver cloth, or *reseuil*, which was lace, also of gold or silver, silk fringes with trimmings of precious metal; there was tapestry in coarse or fine stitch, or Hungarian stitch; or quite simply red or yellow serge. The leather, when it was visible, was crimson morocco,[1] or lemon-coloured, either plain or gilt with the little bookbinder's stamps, or *contre-pointé*, or yet again it was *cuir de bœuf ecorché*, in this case simply stretched, by means of gilt or silvered nails, over the frame of the seat and the back, without any other garniture.

Chairs with garnished arms, of the kind shown in Figs. 29 and 30—characterised by the broad flat arms, with scroll ends, the uprights of the back terminated by a reversed console ornament with acanthus leaf, and by the very ornate cross-piece that joins the front legs, and also, sometimes, the back legs—date from the reign of Henri IV; some were made in France, but the majority were imported, and the style is definitely Hispano-Flemish.

Other *chaises à bras*, rudimentary in structure, were "*toutes garnies*," with a nailed-down velvet covering all over, to the very legs.[2] This fashion was to have a long vogue, since if we are to put faith in Le Brun's tapestry, Louis XIV and the Infanta Marie Thérèse, at the ceremony

1 Then called *cuir de Levant* or *cuir de Turquie*.

2 See in the Louvre the small full-length portraits of Charles X and Louis de Balzac d'Entragues.

of their marriage in 1660, had for seats *chaises à bras* with low backs, coarsely made with round sticks of wood and full-covered with azure velvet sprinkled with gold fleur-de-lys.

Let us add that the inventories teach us (for none of these common chairs has survived), that in the south of France, and presently in Paris, from around 1580, chairs had begun to be done with straw.

But perhaps the most frequently used of all seats were the *carreaux*, or flat squab cushions, everywhere found in great numbers, which were equipped with a big silk tassel by which they could be carried, and which were placed on *chaises à bras*, *escabeaux* and *placets*, when there were any, or on the corner of a coffer or quite simply on the ground. Middle-class folk were content to have them stuffed with straw. At court "the custom was to sit only on the ground when the Queen was present." The inventory of Catherine de Medici shows no less than 381 *carreaux* (only the covers, of course) in one single coffer, some of tapestry stitch, others of gold and silver embroidery on silk, or cloth of gold. Many of them had been embroidered with her own royal hands: "she spent her time, after dinner," Brantôme tells us, "in diligently toiling at her silk work, in which she was as perfect as could be possible."

PART THREE
THE LOUIS XIII STYLE

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE.

Sometimes we hear of a so-called "Henri IV style." In reality it is over-subtle to try to distinguish two distinct and successive styles in the period stretching from 1594 (the beginning of the effective reign of the Béarnais king) to 1660 (the start of Louis the Fourteenth's personal government). In this long and rather confused epoch—let us say, for the sake of simplicity, in the first half of the seventeenth century—something decays and dies, the art of the Renaissance, and something begins to establish itself, which will be the Louis XIV art; both coherent and easy to define; between them interposes an art that has a claim to recognition, and which may well be called Louis XIII, but which lacks a clearly defined physiognomy, because it is full of contradictions, and, taking it on the whole and with certain exceptions, does not possess a frankly national character.

It was, as has been often said, one of those moments of French civilisation when France received more than she gave. The Italian influence and the Hispano-Flemish influence cross, supplant or overlie one another. The reign of Louis XIII comes between two regencies: his

mother was a Florentine, and had sought to impose a Concini on France ; and yet, when she wanted a palace, it was the good Frenchman Salomon de Brosses who had built her the Luxembourg, and to decorate its galleries she had chosen Rubens, while, they say, Richelieu advised her rather to have Josépin the Roman. She continued to pay a pension to the Flemings, Pourbus and Bril, as Henri IV had done. Anne of Austria was a Spaniard ; when Regent she had as her first minister, favourite, and even more, Giulio Mazarini, a passionate lover of art, who would fain see nothing around him but work that was Italian, either by origin or in style. When she is to have her new apartments in the Louvre decorated, she will turn to the insipid Romanelli. An all-powerful Louis XIV with a Colbert beside him were needed, so that national art might receive the encouragement of the State to the exclusion of rivals.

The greatest artists of the time, in painting at least, were they really French ? Poussin himself, a native of Andelys, in Normandy, with his mind after Descartes and his soul after Corneille, Poussin makes Rome his real fatherland ; he lives there for forty years, and dies there after becoming more than half Italian. Claude Gellée, born in Lorraine before it became a French province, always lived in Rome, never went to Paris, never looked on himself as a subject of the king of France, any more than did his compatriot Jacques Callot. Philippe de Champaigne,

a native of Brussels, whose portraits of Jansenists are so French in their "intellectuality" and by the shade of Christianity they express, spends all his life at Paris, but preserves more than one characteristic of his race. Others, the ready decorators, fluent and empty, the La Hires, the Vouets, the Perriers, represent that art, as international as Jesuit architecture and living on a fund of Italian common-places, which is practically identical with itself from Spain to the Low Countries and from Paris to Boulogne. As for the pale Le Sueur, that painter so prodigiously overrated that the simple-minded dictionaries of sixty years ago still referred to him as the "French Raphael," he never was in Italy at all; it seems that the substance of his art was almost all borrowed from the engravings of Marc Antonio, the Marco Dentes, the Agostino Venezianos, and, in spite of the dainty grace of his celebrated Muses, he is decidedly too weak for it to be possible to declare that he represents the true French school. Alone in their modest corner, not altogether despised, since they were all three members of the Académie de peinture in its earliest days, but without influence and relegated to a category of painting regarded as inferior, the mysterious brothers Le Nain, with their scenes of peasant life, awkward, without brilliance, and so movingly true, are French of the purest metal with no trace of alloy.

The art of the carver and sculptor is more

national in quality. The Italian *gran gusto* doubtless is rampant in it, especially in the decoration of churches and palaces; but for one Francheville, a Fleming disguised as *Francavilla*, how many honest artists there were, touched with something of clumsiness, but also, in default of genius, endowed with a probity and respect for life that compel our esteem, men like Simon Guillain, like Warin and the anonymous authors of so many memorial statues that are life-like and convincing.

Architecture, which will presently bring us to furniture, is highly prosperous and very mixed in character. After the critical wars of religion, great fortunes were built up or restored, the need for ease and comfort increased, and at the same time a feeling of greater security and stability. On the other hand, a marked renewal of Catholic piety was clearly manifested. The result was the construction of a great number of mansions in Paris and the towns throughout the kingdom, châteaux in all the provinces, convents and churches everywhere.

Churches keep departing more and more, in their actual structure, no longer merely in decoration, from the pure gothic tradition. Saint Peter's at Rome and the Gesù were the models imitated throughout the whole of Christendom; the architecture known as *Jesuit*, Italian in origin, is as cosmopolitan as the order that gave it its name. A few churches, like Sainte-Marie of Nevers with its inconceivably

complicated façade, even copied the Hispano-Flemish rendering of the trans-Alpine style.

To set off against this, in the domain of lay architecture—not that of the royal palaces, but that of the hôtels and the châteaux of the nobles, the members of the parliament and the financiers—the resistance to the Italian invasion remained strong and effective; French good sense protested against the passive adoption of building methods appropriate to another climate and different habits. There was a great deal of building for private persons in the Paris of Henri IV, of Marie de Medici, of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria; the Place Royale drew up its line of tricoloured hôtels—slate, stone and brick, with their high-pitched roofs; quantities of new homes rejuvenated the Marais; the whole of the Ile Saint-Louis, the old Ile Notre-Dame, saw its bald meadows transformed into streets and quarters with "*logis de qualité*" such as the hôtels Chenizot, Lambert de Thorigny, Lauzun; there were whole new parishes to the north of the Tuileries, and west of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. . . . This first half of the seventeenth century was a period of extraordinary activity for architects, and Corneille can write almost without the least hyperbole:—

Toute une ville entière avec pompe bâtie
Semble d'un vieux fossé par miracle sortie.

This private architecture had the great merit

of forming itself without deliberate preconception or pedantry on the needs and the tastes of a *clientèle* that were perfectly aware of what they wanted, and imposed that on the artists they employed, however it might be at the expense of Vignole and Palladio.[1]

Now these people, although serious, pious and genuinely severe in manners taken as a whole, had a continually increasing taste for social life and intercourse. They were still rude, and physically hardened by war, the chase, and the rural life they led during a considerable part of the year. And so they were not very exacting with regard to comfort; in a hôtel of this period the part intended for private personal life was sacrificed; everything was for "receiving," entertaining. It has often been said that the differentiation of special rooms (salon, dining hall, bedchamber, study, etc.) had not come into existence till the beginning of the eighteenth century. This is true on the whole; but nearly a hundred years earlier certain very complete houses of refined appointments, such as the town

1 It is perhaps superfluous to say that the anecdote, so often repeated unchallenged since Tallemant des Réaux told it first, of the Marquise de Rambouillet turning architect herself and one fine evening, by sudden inspiration (*Quick, paper! I have found out the way to do what I wanted!*) a new method of arranging suites of rooms, is nothing but legend. A legend too is the great novelty of her famous blue room; one has only to read a few inventories of the period to know that there were rooms hung with blue long before that of the incomparable Arthénice. One has to be a school pedant to believe in this dominating importance, in the domain of social life and manners, of the people talked about in the manuals of literary history.

house of président Tubeuf, already contained a winter dining-room and a summer dining-room.

Sauval gives us, in the *Antiquités de la ville de Paris*, a detailed description of this fine Hôtel Tubeuf, which was a completely typical example of the town house. It was built on the plan then in fashion; a main building between the court and the garden, with two wings to right and left of the court, reaching to the street. The président's suite, on the ground floor, was sufficiently modest: it included a hall, a study, a chamber with an alcove and a small chamber; then, still on the ground floor, there were the two dining-rooms we have just mentioned, the kitchen, the offices and other common apartments. On the "*bel étage*," after ascending an immense staircase, you came to the far more spacious suite of Mme. la présidente: a "*grande salle*" [1] with arched wooden roof, a state chamber with an alcove and a gallery, occupying all of one wing"; the *galerie* was indispensable for all who prided themselves on "*propreté*," as it was then called, that is to say, elegance. This was the entertaining suite. A second suite, much smaller and intimate, "so convenient," Sauval says, "that it is much more often occupied than the other, as being not so vast and more retired, while the first one seems only made for luxury and receiving," was composed of a vestibule, a

1 The word *salon*, borrowed from the Italian, was not to come into ordinary use until the last quarter of the century.

chamber, a cabinet and a clothes-closet; it was served by a small private staircase.

The state suite was arranged "*en enfilade*," the doors, far larger than in the sixteenth century, opening with double leaves one over against the other, the windows, enormous, without mullions, allowed abundant light to enter through square glass panes of large size and almost perfectly transparent. The ceilings, arched and subdivided into compartments, were ornamented with paintings and high reliefs of painted and gilded stucco; the walls were stretched with goffered leather, gilt and silvered, Flemish tapestries, and silk stuffs, or they were covered with painted wainscoting and gilt in panels made with large high mouldings; the fireplaces, always monumental, made of stone and marble in the large rooms, often of wood in small rooms, as a rule had their overmantel adorned by a painting.[1] All this decoration was rich and pompous, heavy in its details; sometimes quite the contrary, of the most sober severity; the fine and almost winged grace of the Renaissance was far away now.

That, in its main lines, is the frame within which we must imagine the furniture of the Louis XIII style. A room thus decorated, even if unfurnished, never seemed void; by way of furniture nothing was put into it beyond what was necessary, and that was very little.

Let us take up our period from its earliest days. The entry of Henri IV into Paris after

1 Most frequently a portrait.

his abjuration, and then the Edict of Nantes, put an end to the wars of religion, the "frenzies" of the Ligue, and the Spanish peril, which had dispersed and disorganised everything, threatened the very existence of France and thrown all the arts into a kind of stuporous sleep. The great reconstructor that the first of the Bourbons was in every department was most careful—though personally he was apparently without any taste in such matters—not to neglect these trivialities, as Sully called them grumblingly; "*ladre vert*" as he was, if we are to believe d'Aubigné, a "stingy fellow," he understood the value of sumptuary spendings and helped artists with his pennies at the same time as he encouraged to the best of his ability the industries of art.

In 1608, by letters patent, which inflicted a serious blow upon the privileges of the guilds—whether for greater good or for harm to the industries of art this is not the place to discuss—he granted certain privileged artists and craftsmen lodgings in the great gallery of the Louvre, by which means they escaped from ordinary jurisdiction, and consequently from the regulations of their trade guild. They had power to train apprentices, who became masters in their turn, "both in Paris and in the other towns of the realm, without being called upon to execute any masterpiece, to take letters, to present themselves for mastership, to invite, when passed, the masters of the said towns, or give a feast for them or anything else whatever." There in the

Louvre, on the ground floor of the gallery along the river, there were mathematicians, damaskeners, tapestry makers, embroiderers, painters, sculptors, and joiners also; thus in the first list, that of 1608, there figures Laurent Stabre, "joiner and carpenter in ebony, maker of cabinets to the King."

This title is in itself of a whole revolution in luxury carpentering in France. We have indicated the increasingly marked taste at the end of the sixteenth century for furniture in which the sober effects of reliefs broadly or delicately cut in solid walnut were replaced by the more showy and easier effects of a polychromy obtained by the juxtaposition of different materials. It was a foreign trick, "German fashion," or "Genoa fashion," or "Spanish fashion." At the beginning of the new century it is all over; all luxurious joiner's work, or nearly all, is *ébénisterie*; the glorious and characteristically French tradition of the carvers in oak and walnut is in danger of dying out. Moderate furniture, if the phrase may be permitted, that belonging to the plain middle classes or to that part (the very great majority) of the nobility which cannot follow the fashions of the "great," still continues indeed to be made of massive home-grown wood; but when it is carved it is in a common-place fashion, with neither invention nor character; the joiners confine themselves to clumsily copying Renaissance motives that had become mere stock common-places.

Ebony was the triumphant material before the importation in large quantities of coloured woods from the two Americas. Hard and capable of a perfect polish, it is brittle and very prone to splitting and chapping; it could not be used in large masses, and the supports of the seventeenth century cabinets are generally made of blackened pearwood. The technique of this funereal wood, as practised under Henri IV and Louis XIII, is half-way between that of solid wood and that of veneering. Upon a substructure of common wood, of vulgar deal even, were glued sheets of ebony of sufficient thickness—about eight millimetres—to allow of carving in very shallow bas-relief. These sheets formed compartments geometrically framed with those delicate wavy mouldings, invented, they say, by the German Hans Schwanhard, which had such a great vogue in the Low Countries.[1] Those surfaces which were not carved were often engraved with incised *rinceaux* and flowers. As for the carvings, which were very flat, they were scenes of mythology or religious subjects, so complicated and of such heavy exuberance that they betray their Flemish origin, or the imitation, made in France, of Flemish models. This technique excludes all curving surfaces; and thus furniture made in this way—cabinets, and sometimes

1 On this subject we might remark that most of the paintings of the Dutch school were meant to be framed in ebony with waved mouldings, not in gilt wood carved in high relief; the way they have been framed for the last two centuries is a pure misconception.

cupboards in two sections—necessarily are of a simple, square, massive structure. In spite of the gloomy aspect and uniformity of the material, these all-ebony cabinets are very sumptuously splendid. But the shimmer of the black polished surfaces too often kills the modelling; in this respect ebony is by far inferior to walnut.

On other cabinets ivory was wedded to ebony, or else bone; these were "German" cabinets, which does not mean that they were all made beyond the Rhine; they were made also at Antwerp and in France itself, but it is a difficult matter to attribute with any certainty their proper origin to those that have survived, unless it is disclosed by an inscription, by a coat of arms, or by the dress of the persons represented in the decoration.

France continued also to import from Flanders and from Spain (but in this case the Spanish and the Flemish styles intermingle so as to be completely indistinguishable, which is not at all astonishing) those *chaises à bras* and *à vertugadin* fitted with leather fastened on to the wood with big decorative gilt or silvered nails, which we saw make their appearance under Henri III; these also were copied among us, and, just as for the cabinets, it is difficult to establish the actual place where they were made. Generally speaking, however, when they are "*à piliers tors*," with legs and uprights turned to a spiral, the spiral more drawn out and a

softer profile in the turning indicate a Hispano-Flemish origin.

Thirty or forty years after the first installation of artists in the galleries of the Louvre, this slightly humiliating subjection of the French furniture industry to that of the Low Countries still endures, for a certain Jean Macé or Massé, joiner in ebony and a native of Blois, receives his lodging-warrant in 1664 "on account of his long experience in that art acquired in the Low Countries and the proofs he hath given thereof by the examples of cabinet-making in ebony and other woods of divers colours which he presented to the Queen Regent." Note by the way these "woods of divers colours"; we have come to the moment when Holland and Flanders are producing and exporting large quantities of those cupboards, bureaux, and tables (cabinets of this species are uncommon) on which flourish very full and overladen motives of flowers represented "to the life," in marquetry of wood inlaid on an ebony ground. In the interval there had worked for the king, as *menuisiers-ébéniers*[1] a Van Opstal, an Ostermayer, an Equeman, whose names tell their origin sufficiently clearly.

As for Italy (although the second wife of Henri IV, the regent during the minority of Louis XIII, was an Italian), the productions of that country had less vogue than those of the Low Countries, and it is incontestable that the whole of French

1 The word *ébéniste* was not to be accepted finally until the end of the seventeenth century.

decorative art is much more Flemish than Italian down to about 1645. At the same time, alongside cabinets of Flemish origin or in the Flemish style, the inventories do not fail fairly frequently to note others that are "of lapis and agate," in other words, imported from Florence, or "*filetés d'argent à la mode d'Italie*"; but they are the exception. Similarly, beginning from the moment when the influence of Mazarin in such things was established over Richelieu—who had, it is said, entrusted him with his purchases of works of art of every kind—and then over Anne of Austria and thence over the whole court, there was no sudden change in the fashion, but the ratio between Flemish and Italian furniture was gradually reversed.

We have very little knowledge of the artistic riches brought together by Richelieu in his Palais-Cardinal—the Palais-Royal of to-day—and in his immense Château de Richelieu; they were doubtless very similar to those which, a few years later, Mazarin was to accumulate with all the passion of a collector. The inventory of Mazarin's furniture and possessions has been preserved; it is a prodigious accumulation, overwhelming almost, of furniture, goldsmith's work, jewels and priceless fabrics. It will never be surpassed in magnificence except by the furniture of the Crown under Louis XIV; and the latter will surpass it infinitely in artistic value, for it seems that Mazarin loved above everything richness of material and a luxury that was more showy than refined.

He possessed more than twenty cabinets with niches, statuettes, busts, balustrades, pilasters, pillars, terminals, bas-reliefs, on which were brought together every imaginable kind of precious material, from gilt brass to mother-of-pearl, from cornelian to lapis lazuli, from ebony to tortoiseshell, from ivory to silver, from *tableaux de mignature* to mosaics of precious stones. Here is a description of one : "A cabinet of ebony, of the Ionic order, adorned with six pilasters of lapis with fillets and capitals of gilt brass, in the base of which there are three pictures in miniature representing three parts of the world. In the first stage there are two niches with two figures of gilt brass, one representing Force and the other Temperance, and in the middle a picture in miniature in which is depicted Rome triumphant; the upper stage is composed of three pictures similarly in miniature representing three Roman legends, the said stage being ornamented with two satyrs in gilt brass, carrying on their heads baskets of fruit, and serving as pilasters. The pediment, adorned with two large cartouches and cornice of ebony with lapis lazuli inlay, between which is painted a miniature dial, in the middle of which is a Venus holding a heart in her right hand, and before her is a Cupid. The whole outlined in gilt brass, and all the said pictures surrounded with a small festoon also of gilt brass." Ebony, lapis, and gilt brass; that must have made a harmony, or rather a dissonance of unparalleled crudeness.

Another of Mazarin's cabinets was decorated with niches containing ebony vases holding silver bouquets, and by lapis pillars with silver bases and capitals; the doors and the fronts of the innumerable drawers were covered with cornelians, agates, jaspers set in silver; elsewhere silver inlay outlined cartouches and *rinceaux*. Another had its façade overladen with garlands, fruits, flowers, *pots à bouquets*, pictures of flowers and birds, all inlaid with stone, lapis, cornelian, chalecdony, jasper and yellow marble.

Among these bedizened monuments some most certainly came from the workshops of Tuscany; others had been executed in Paris by Italian lapidaries suborned at immense cost by the minister, whom Louis XIV was later to take into his own service, and whose names have been preserved; these were the brothers Ferdinando and Orazio Migliorini, Luigi Giacetti, Branchi and others. The carving and chasing were carried out by Domenico Cucci and Filippo Caffieri, the founder of the illustrious dynasty that was to become so completely French.

Nearly all the *stipi* of this period—to give them their Italian name—were destroyed after the end of the seventeenth century, so contrary were they to French taste; there is one, however, in the Cluny Museum which will give an idea of the kind of thing they were. It is shapeless and of extraordinary ugliness.

Many also, in the Mazarin collection, were the tables of stone mosaic or *pierres de Florence*,

real mineralogical pictures on a black ground of touch. Upon one, shields with ciphers; on another, "trophies of Turkish weapons"; a third was over-flourished largely with flowery *rinceaux*; on it there might be seen "an oval, from all four sides of which spring bouquets of divers kinds of flowers, foliage and fruits, with sundry butterflies and birds on the branches, filling the ground of the said table, and in the midst of the said oval a basket of flowers, all the said flowers, fruits, foliage, branches, birds, oval and basket being of divers stone inlay, to wit, cornelian, chalcedony and lapis."

The frieze and legs of these tables began to be generally made of gilt wood, in spite of the formal prohibition of this issued from time to time by the king; we know that the usual and characteristic fate of sumptuary laws is never to be enforced.

Anne of Austria's favourite was in other respects, in spite of his very natural taste for the things of his own country, an eclectic; he no more scorned the furniture of the Low Countries than his compatriots hesitated to have their portraits painted by a Flemish artist. He had enticed from Holland a cabinet-maker called Pierre Golle, and from him he ordered cabinets that were perhaps a little more sober, but still quite sufficiently garish; one was of ebony "*profilé a'étain*," which means that the surfaces were divided into compartments outlined with inlaid tin filleting; it displayed the inevitable

niches flanked by small marble pillars with capitals of gilt bronze and inhabited by allegorical statuettes; the support was composed of twelve gilt terminals displaying the signs of the zodiac. Another was ornamented with "squares, lozenges, triangles and ovals of tortoiseshell" outlined in waved mouldings. Here we see the principal elements—tortoiseshell, tin and gilt bronzes on an ebony ground—of the art with which the name of André Boulle has become inseparably joined, but which was not invented by Boulle.

To finish with the Mazarin furniture, which is of the highest historical importance, let us take at random the description of a bed. These are only stuffs now, the wooden parts are completely clad over, the curtains, *cantonnières*,* *pentes*,* and *soubassements** are crimson velvet embroidered with silver flowers, alternating in stripes with silver cloth embroidered with gold flowers, the whole lined with crimson taffeta and edged with a gold and silver fringe; sheaths of cloth of silver surround the bed posts, which terminate at the top with vases covered with crimson taffeta and each containing a bouquet of solid silver flowers.

This furniture is unique in its own day for richness, but it is not exceptional in style. Fouquet's furniture (and he could almost rival Mazarin in taste for splendour as in the squandering of public wealth) is completely similar, though the Surintendant des Finances seems to have been

rather more refined in taste than the minister; and many other inventories are available to prove that all the most super-luxurious and costly furniture, down to 1660 or 1670, had the same characteristics.

What was there really French in all this? Nothing, or hardly anything. The wholesome and honest tradition of France, which would fain have the beauty of a piece of furniture, like that of a building, depend first and foremost on the frank expression of the use it was meant for, on the method of construction and the qualities of the material, that tradition is broken. The part of the Louis XIV period is gradually to restore it.

But it was in princely furniture that the tradition was lost. It was happily different with less costly pieces.

The chronology relating to those of the latter that can be called Louis XIII in style is almost impossible to ascertain. Let us say simply that the oldest may have been made under Henri IV; as for the most recent, in certain regions they come down at latest to the end of the eighteenth century. One of the most constant and best known characteristics of this style is the use of turning, and especially of spiral turning. Now, if beds and tables "*à piliers tors*" had been made from the end of the sixteenth century, on the other hand, at Paris to the end of the seventeenth, and still later in the provinces, nearly all the seats and the tables in ordinary

sets of furniture still had their legs turned in this fashion, and a goodly number among the royal furniture itself. Let us take two examples, the first that come to hand. The billiard table of Louis XIV, about 1700,[1] had baluster legs, joined by spiral cross pieces; the portrait by Ferdinand Elle[2] of Mme. de Maintenon with her youthful niece Françoise d'Aubigné shows us the foundress of Saint-Cyr sitting, about the same date, in a large gilt arm-chair, "very Louis XIV" in its back and arms, but with spiral turned legs.

Carving on furniture is in a style that is no other than that of the Renaissance in its decline, but overloaded and so to say vulgarized; it has something heavy, borrowed, unoriginal, that makes us regret the light grace, the delicacy in the harmonies, the Attic rightness of the proportions, and also the fancy, that indescribable touch of fineness, sprightliness and happy invention and improvisation, that enchants us in the best productions of the preceding age. This style is akin to that of opulent Flanders, but without falling into the flabby turgidness which is unendurably found in the decorative parts of the cartoons executed by Rubens' studio for Phillip IV, now in the Louvre, the *Triumph of*

1 See Trouvain's engraving.

2 At Versailles. In her celebrated portrait by Mignard (in the Louvre) Mme. de Maintenon is seated on a chair the back of which, the only part visible, with its fringed velvet surrounding the uprights, and its turned brass vases, is in the pure Louis XIII style. Now the portrait was painted somewhere about 1690.

Religion and the *Prophet Elijah*. The architect Blondel seems to us to have given an excellent definition of the Louis XIII decorative art when he noted in Jean Le Paultre (who engraved his plates of architecture and ornaments about the middle of the seventeenth century) "that air of heaviness . . . in which we nevertheless remark a masculine, firm and well sustained expression."

What are the principal motives? The period invented hardly any at all. Here is the plume,[1] everywhere repeated *ad nauseam*, and a whole gamut of motives half-way between the plume and the acanthus leaf[2]; the acanthus leaf, which is retailed, so to speak, by the fathom as a running ornament,[3] or shapes itself into consoles modillions,[4] the feet of pieces of furniture[5]; running *rinceaux*[6]; *entrelacs* enclosing in their loops rosettes or half rosettes, and employed as running[7] motives or to decorate a rectangular panel[8]; the winged cherub's head[9]; the flower vase, the shell,[10] the oval or *miroir*,[11] the eagle's talon clutching a ball, called *pied a'aiglon*,[12]

1 Figs. 36, 39, 41, 43.
2 Figs. 37 and 38.
3 Fig. 37.
4 Figs. 35—38, 41.
5 Fig. 34.
6 Fig. 35.
7 Fig. 74.
8 Fig. 36.
9 Figs. 34 and 36.
10 Fig. 36. Observe the interesting awkwardness with which a rustic joiner has interpreted in his own way the Renaissance motives on this cupboard in two sections from the Dordogne valley.
11 Fig. 34.
12 Fig. 38.

eagle's foot, which serves as a foot to certain cupboards. None of all these are novelties. We may add the eagle with outspread wings, the garland or festoon of flowers and fruits, at this time compact, thick, and made up of vegetable elements treated in a sufficiently realistic fashion; drapery arranged in festoons or swags; crossed palms; gadroons, etc.

The great majority of Louis XIII furniture, of the kind with which we are concerned, was decorated not with carving but with turnery; never was this method of working wood, which is quick, easy, and highly effective with little trouble, more in use. Not merely were the legs and stretchers of tables[1] turned, the feet of coffers and cabinets,[2] and all parts of chairs,[3] but also corner columns, purely ornamental, for cupboards[4]; similar columns, either entire[5] or split down the middle,[6] were glued on the central upright,[7] whether true or false, of large cupboards with two doors. The most rudimentary form of turning was called *en chapelet*[8]; the most frequent was spiral, sometimes plain,[9] and sometimes embellished with a fillet in the bottom of the groove.[10] A spiral cross-bar was often in-

1 Figs. 53—62.
2 Figs. 31, 32, 39.
3 Figs. 63—78.
4 Figs. 37, 38, 40, etc.
5 Fig. 51.
6 Fig. 50.
7 The *partie dormante*.
8 Figs. 31, 62, 63, etc.
9 Figs. 37, 38, etc.
10 Figs. 40, 44, etc.

terrupted in the middle by a certain length of plain circular turning.[1] The legs of many tables from Burgundy are composed, in a rather curious fashion, of two parts, one spiral and the other singularly like the air-cooled radiator of a Hotchkiss gun.[2] Small cupboards of finished workmanship may have twisted columns with ends carved with a kind of tuft of leaves or a tulip.[3] A more refined form of turnery, and one that may be really a work of art, because the outlines are capable of infinite variety, according to the fancy of the craftsman, is turning *en balustre*.[4] It lasted longer than the *piliers tors*, and most of the tables in which it appears are of the Louis XIV period; but the regal balusters in the shape of a carafe which serve as supports to the buffet or cabinet, reproduced in Fig. 39, are highly characteristic of the Louis XIII period.

The legs of tables and seats were turned out of pieces of wood square in section, and this square form was left intact in places where the maximum strength was necessary, and so the greatest possible amount of the material was to be preserved, that is to say, at the joining points (by tenon and mortise) of the frieze or the cross-bars of the stretcher; and as almost always happens, out of this technical necessity there was evolved a very happy shape.[1] These prismatic

1 Figs. 53, 65.
2 Fig. 55.
3 Fig. 37
4 Figs. 32, 58, 59, etc.

parts are much pleasanter to the eye when the turner was satisfied with chamfering off the angles and left the faces plain than when he fancied he must embellish them with a kind of *rosace* carved into the wood.

Ornamental pieces were also made by turning, such as those *pommes*, vases, or *toupies* that decorated either the middle of the longitudinal cross-piece of an **H**-shaped stretcher, or the point of intersection of the two bars of an **X**-shaped stretcher[2]; such again as the little square panels with concentric mouldings that decorate the doors of certain cupboards.[3]

Symmetry—and we know to what extent the seventeenth century was enamoured of it—demanded that pairs of twisted pillars flanking the façade of an armoire, and the legs of a table, taken in pairs, should have their spirals turning in opposite directions. This arrangement is nevertheless rare, and is only found on pieces of very refined workmanship.[4] Almost always the spirals turn from left to right, like a bind-weed stem; really a matter of the turner's convenience.

Mouldings have very close kinship with turnery, or rather the work of the lathe is merely a combination of circular mouldings; the play of light

1 Figs. 53, 69, etc.
2 Figs. 54, 59.
3 This motive is common on Breton panelled furniture, much less common elsewhere. It had been occasionally used ever since the sixteenth century.
4 Figs. 37 and 38. See also the sofa, Fig. 75.

and shade is the same on a turned column as on a moulded upright, and hence the perfect unity of a cupboard on which these two elements of woodworking are combined. Louis XIII and Louis XIV moulding—for it is all one and the same thing—is less fine, but more ample, more strongly expressed and much more developed than that of the Renaissance; certain seventeenth century pieces of furniture, and not the least handsome, have only mouldings as their sole decorations. It was then that cupboards were crowned with those noble cornices, complicated, overflowing, on which the horizontal lines were multiplied to infinity, cornices matched below with bases symmetrical with them and almost as strongly projecting; the light seems to stream and pour over them with shimmering ripples like a sheet of water over the steps of a garden cascade in the French style. Other mouldings in large numbers enframe the doors, the drawers; others strongly mark the general divisions of the whole piece and the subdivisions of its parts.[1]

It is not uncommon for the decoration of somewhat narrow surfaces to be entrusted to moulding designs hollowed in the wood, as, for instance, to the right and the left of the doors of the pretty cupboard in two parts seen in Fig. 42. These vertical mouldings very happily clothe the bareness of the neutral parts of the façade, while redeeming the width of the drawers.

1 See in particular Figs. 48 and 49-51.

Sometimes the drawers have their front entirely covered with horizontal mouldings.[1]

But the following are the two most usual ways in which the surfaces were embellished in these pieces, which are the triumph of pure joiner's work. Sometimes they were covered almost all over with a very wide enframement made up of bevels and mouldings, like the frames of the mirrors of the period, which only leaves plain, in the middle, a small projecting plateau, rectangular[2] or with a quarter circle hollowed out of the corners[3]; sometimes the doors of cupboards, their lateral faces, the façades of table drawers,[4] are subdivided into several surfaces of geometrical outline. In the simplest types, which are also the oldest,[5] each door of a cupboard is divided up into four small panels by means of an upright and a traverse crossing it, which enclose them; otherwise it is a lozenge cut in the solid wood and accompanied by four small triangles. It is this last combination, or that made up of triangles grouped in fours, and separated by a St. Andrew's cross, which is used to decorate the sides of cupboards.

Suppose the bevels of one of these lozenges to be indefinitely increased at the expense of the projecting central table-ground. It will then go through the intermediate stage displayed on

1 Figs. 39, 43, 54.
2 Figs. 35, 39, 44, upper section; 48, the little panels to right and left of the door.
3 Fig. 38.
4 Fig. 56.
5 Figs. 32 and 33.

each of its doors by the cupboard of Fig. 42; then in the end the little central lozenge would be reduced to a point, and we should have a low pyramid with quadrangular base; this is the *pointe de diamant*,[1] or diamond point. In the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, when brilliant-cutting was invented, *pointe naive* was the phrase for a diamond naturally crystallised in the shape of a regular octahedron—two square-based pyramids set base to base. There are also natural diamond crystals whose shape is a *pyramided* cube, that is to say, a cube each face of which carries a low pyramid; this is precisely the "diamond-point" of our cupboards properly so-called. Four small triangular pyramids flank the lozenge pyramid; the whole is cut into a slab of thick wood.

There is the starting point. Soon this faceted motive was diversified and complicated at the same time. Here is a cupboard[2] with four *guichets* on which the lozenge is subdivided into four triangles; altogether the square panel carries eight equal triangular pyramids, or twenty-four facets turned in eight different directions, thus having eight different light-values; the effect is exceedingly happy. Here again is another whose façade perhaps goes wrong for lack of simplicity. Two of the panels have triangular pyramids; but the slopes of these are concave, which makes the play of light more delicate.

1 Figs. 45, 50, 51, in the lower part of the doors.

2 Fig. 43. The same motive, in this instance elongated, is found on the door of the cupboard in Fig. 47.

The square panel of the middle has in its centre a tiniest square pyramid surrounded by four L-shaped motives, which are fairly frequent; they often enframe a narrow rectangular panel. We also meet with a lozenge elongated vertically and flanked by six triangles, the whole being outlined by two St. Andrew's crosses . . . and many other combinations as well.

One of the most usual and most agreeable is a kind of star,[1] on a square panel, made of eight grooves marking off eight pyramids, four of which have triangular bases; the other four have an irregular quadrilateral for base[2]; all the apexes are turned towards the centre, which is marked by a round button. Here there are twenty-eight facets and twelve different orientations. This arrangement is called *pointes de gâteau;* the expression conveys a picture, and indeed the whole effect is not altogether unlike a square tart cut into eight sections. An additional refinement was to replace the triangles by a species of arrow heads[3]; taken in fours they form a cross of the order of the Saint-Esprit.

If the bevels of an elongated rectangular panel are increased, they will come together and in that case result in a solid mass known as a *tas de sable* or sand heap. It is not an uncommon motive among these faceted decorations, and we see it in the middle of each door of the monumental armoire shown in Fig. 51.

1 Figs. 40 and 44.
2 A rhomboid, to give it its proper name.
3 Fig. 51.

The furniture with diamond point ornament of which we have spoken up to the present was made by Gascon joiners; nowhere else was this motive so high in favour, employed in such perfection, or so long in going out of fashion as in Gascony and in Guienne. It was largely used in Burgundy as well, but in a different spirit. Sobriety, clear-cutness, purity of lines, were never qualities of the Burgundian style. There[1] pyramids on lozenge and triangular bases were too often used as a surcharge, so to speak, upon rectangular panels with hollowed corners, giving a certain clumsiness of effect, and later, well into the eighteenth century, even on those panels with curved outlines belonging to the Louis XV style, which was indeed one of the worst errors in taste that a craftsman could commit. It made it necessary to curve the sides of the pyramid, and so to destroy its characteristic trenchant firmness, which one may not specially like, but which is the foundation for the quite special, slightly harsh, flavour of this style.

Great horizontal cornices, parallel mouldings regular spirals, triangles and polyhedra, a frequent total absence of curved lines, sharp arrises, angles of every opening; all this is precise, geometrical, abstract, intentional, strict and severe in correctness, without fancifulness, and therefore in harmony with the general spirit of the period of Descartes, of the Arnaulds, of Nicole, of Poussin, of Philippe de Champaigne.

1 Figs. 47 and 49.

CHAPTER TWO: DIFFERENT PIECES OF FURNITURE

In the seventeenth century the decay of the coffer still progresses. It is still indeed, in modest homes, the essential and often even the only piece of furniture; but it is ceasing to be a thing of elegance—except of course the marriage coffer (or *corbeille*), small, highly decorated, very refined, on which a Boulle will not disdain to lavish all the resources of his art. As with other pieces of furniture, the fashion under Louis XIII is to conceal coffers under stuffs; for this express purpose there were made *tapis à pentes*, that is to say, with four pieces each prolonging the side of a rectangle; these pieces hung down to the ground and came together exactly at the corners, or they were often even buttoned edge to edge. Sometimes a garniture of stuff or tapestry was nailed upon a coffer of plain wood. Thus, in the house of Marie Cressé, wife of Jean Poquelin, the king's *tapissier*, and mother of Molière, "a large square coffer *bahut*[1] with lock and key, covered with needlework tapestry, with flowers, with its frame and legs in walnut." But most frequently these *bahuts*, which continued to serve as trunks upon occasion, were clad in red or black leather and covered with gilt-headed nails forming decorative designs.

1 That is to say, with flat lid and not arched as was the *bahut* properly so-called.

Large or small, coffers were, even more usually than in the preceding century, placed as we have just seen upon frames with four legs or on real tables made for the purpose and fitted with drawers,[1] or again on a kind of special trestle; we find in an inventory of 1654, "a large *coffre à bahut* covered with black leather with nails, sitting upon two little walnut seats."

In the meantime the coffer resting on the ground and capable of being used as a seat was still in existence, especially in antechambers, and that even in the king's household. Mme. de Montpensier relates in her *Memoirs* how at Fontainebleau Turenne came one morning to pay his court to her as she was about to "take her chemise" . . . and had "to wait half an hour in the antechamber sitting on the coffers." That is a consecrated phrase that shows that such a way of being seated was still customary. But coffers were very speedily to come to seem very old-fashioned among the great folk.

The cabinet, on the contrary, was now at the height of favour, it was the last word in elegant furniture. It was a point of honour to possess one of the finest taste, just as it was to have a handsome state bed. They were brought, as we have seen, at great expense from Germany, the Low Countries, or Italy; there are some to be found of every size, from the little coffer of embroidered velvet placed on the corner of a table to the monumental piece held up by twelve

1 Fig. 31.

terminals; of every material from engraved mother of pearl and gilt *repoussé* iron to ebony, tortoise-shell, ivory, with fine stones set in silver gilt. Some are of unheard-of richness, and others, among the middle classes of moderate wealth, quite plainly made of walnut. These last are very like buffets, and to speak correctly, the word "cabinet" in the seventeenth century, especially in the provinces, denotes not costly pieces filled with small drawers, but buffets or even real cupboards.

The cabinet or buffet from Guyenne, reproduced in Fig. 39, is a very typical example, with its big turned carafe-balusters for supports, its two *guichets* with bevelled high projecting panel, its sober decoration of upright plumes, its hinges, keyhole plates, and drawer handles still very small. As the style evolved, these metal fittings gradually become larger, especially the hinges on pins, and assumed a decorative value; the handles [1] and the buttons on rosettes [2] cut out of sheet-iron were to give place to flattened [3] or gadrooned [4] knobs and to drop handles, often made of two dolphins [5] set face to face; the keyhole plates took what was to remain the traditional shape down to the period of Louis XVI, a winged dragon more or less recognisable.[6]

These details—on the supposition that the

1 Figs. 36 and 39.
2 Fig. 38.
3 Figs. 40 and 44.
4 Fig. 45.
5 Fig. 48.
6 Figs. 44, 46, 48, etc.

metal fittings have not been changed from the original ones—are still the least uncertain data for fixing the date of pieces belonging to this style, a date that in any case is very much an approximation only.

But it was above all the cupboard that triumphed among middle-class furniture in the seventeenth century. There is, so to say, neither shape, nor arrangement, nor size of cupboard that is not found in the Louis XIII style.

Now that life had become more stable, and that seats were to be found everywhere, the cupboard dethroned the coffer, and took its place as the fundamental and essential piece of furniture. It served, in divers shapes, as refuge for all that one possessed and that was worth locking up: clothes, linen, plate, silver, for books among the lettered, for tools among workers; in the kitchen it served as a buffet . . . indeed, was there anything it did not serve for?

Its varieties are legion. To begin with the most ancient types, there was the square cupboard with four doors, with small flat panels, monastic in its simplicity. Modest in its dimensions, it sometimes squats on a frame with four turned legs, like a coffer[1]; if larger it rests on flattened balls.[2] It looks like a mural cup-

1 Fig. 32.

2 Fig. 33. This one has a cornice that is too small (less projecting than the base) for it not to have originally been crowned with a pediment. Nearly all these pediments, which were fixed and fragile, have disappeared or been replaced. When the cornice projects boldly (Figs. 35, 40, 44, etc.), it forms a sufficient crown and there never has been a pediment.

board (one built-in) that has been detached from the wall.

Then we have a shape recalling the Renaissance by its restricted dimensions and the setting back of its upper story, the small cupboard in two parts with two doors, often delightful for its fine proportions, the delicacy of its decoration made up of mouldings, turning, and pierced iron fittings. We give two good examples of this type. The first[1] of these, with two superimposed drawers, is remarkable because it is complete and completely untouched by the restorer—a very rare combination; it has preserved its graceful pediment with the little platform for a statuette or turned vase; the carving on it is far from commonplace, with its curious rendering of the plume and the acanthus leaf; the pillars are very pretty. The second[2] has unfortunately lost its pediment; its eagle's talons are of excellent workmanship.

Next comes the tall narrow cupboard, with two doors and two parts duplicating one another, or at any rate of the same width, and separated by a drawer; we reproduce two specimens—one[3] with diamond points, or more strictly *pointes de gâteau*, corner columns and a handsome boldly projecting cornice; the other[4] completely covered with carvings, pretty naive in execution, made in the south-west of France

1 Fig. 37.
2 Fig. 38.
3 Fig. 40.
4 Fig. 41.

but slightly Flemish in aspect—which are a very harmonious pair.

More squat in shape, the cupboard of Fig. 42 is full of character; we have indicated above the interesting use the joiner made of mouldings to decorate its surfaces. The pediment (except the turned vases) is old and curious, with its two great palms or ostrich feathers carved in the thickness of the walnut planking. Note the asymmetry of the drawers; only the one on the right shuts with lock and key, but a kind of inside wooden bolt, that can only be worked on pulling out this first drawer, allows the one on the left to be fastened. This economy of one lock displays a rather pleasing rusticity; it is far from uncommon. The ball feet of this pretty cupboard are relatively small, very slightly flattened, and disengaged; which is an almost certain proof that the date of its making is much earlier than that of the cupboards with highly developed feet, very flattened, shaped like rather ugly cushions,[1] which seem intended to spare the sharp and delicate corners of the base from a knock with a broom, a chair-leg, or perhaps a man's boot.

Among the cupboards in two parts with four doors, more advanced in style than those with sixteen small panels, of which we spoke at the beginning of this chapter, some continue to have the two parts equal in width, which gives them a heavy square-shouldered air that is, at the first

1 Fig. 48, and especially Figs. 44 and 49.

glance, by no means agreeable. Such cupboards were made practically everywhere, in Normandy, in Auvergne, in the south-west, but chiefly in the east, in Burgundy, Bresse, Franche-Comté, and more especially in the county of Montbéliard. The Montbéliard cupboards, which the present-day jargon of the dealers calls *armoires protestantes*, "Protestant cupboards," doubtless because there are many Lutherans in this region, are very curious.[1] They are composed of two superimposed sections, separated by two drawers, and flanked or not flanked by spiral pillars; the panels are most frequently *à table saillante* and the sides equipped with four large iron drop handles, as though they were really two separate pieces of furniture, two coffers with doors set one on top of the other and made for frequent journeyings. The carving on these is heavy and thick, especially on the pediments, which are composed of big rinceaux in open-work, and more Teutonic than French in manner; in fact, the Germanic influence was for a long time much stronger in this country than the French influence, for the county of Montbéliard was a part of the Empire and under the Duchy of Wurtemburg before 1792. The cupboard we have chosen for reproduction[1] is of a somewhat uncommon elegance, thanks to its pretty cornice and the rinceaux of a certain fineness carved upon it.

The Gascon type in this category of cupboards

1 Fig. 35.

uniform in width is sometimes less squat in shape, because they are provided below with a large drawer that forms a *soubassement.*

But the greatest number of the Louis XIII cupboards in two parts have the upper part narrower than the lower, the difference being greatest in the oldest examples. Certain very wide pieces, for instance, the cupboard with such amusingly naive carvings reproduced in Fig. 36, have a middle part with three drawers, and a neutral piece, between the doors, of excessive size, which makes them far from convenient. The cupboard in question looks mean at the top, as though beheaded; it should have a pediment. There are slenderer ones whose doors hinge on narrow uprights, and which have only a small square-fronted *layette coulisse* between two drawers,[1] or else two drawers only; others have two pull-out shelves as well. And lastly, the most elaborate and complicated have four drawers, like the monumental piece shown in Fig. 44, so tall that it is impossible to reach the top shelves of the upper part without standing on a stool.

We have lost the habit of cupboards in two parts, and that is why to-day they are generally regarded, and used, as buffets; and indeed they serve very well in that guise. The narrow cupboard with only one door was also known, as we see by the one shown in Fig. 45. Gascon in origin, typical with its *soubassement* fitted with

1 Fig. 43.

a drawer and its large and very austere diamond points. The one shown in the next figure, without a drawer and larger in its proportions, is more complicated in decoration but has less mouldings; the flat enframement of the door, contrasted with the mouldings on the body of the piece, gives it a quite different character from that of the cupboards in Figs. 45, 47 and 48; it was certainly made in Brittany. The Burgundian cupboard of Fig. 47 is, so to say, chopped up to the last degree, and offers not a single plane surface, no rest for the eye; in that it is very much of its native land. The one that follows (Fig. 48) is from Bordeaux, and has a most elaborate façade, highly tormented in its composition; the narrowness of the door is noteworthy. It is made of handsome light-coloured walnut with what is a somewhat uncommon feature, some of its mouldings enamelled in black. The cornice is an imposing thing.

And lastly, the largest and most majestical are those with two doors shutting, either one upon the other with a false neutral portion,[1] or on a fixed upright.[2] We give illustrations of two from Gascony and one from Burgundy; and here again the style of the latter appears confused and overloaded when compared with the fine clear definiteness of the others, especially of the one in Fig. 51, whose main lines, as well as the composition of the panels, are beyond reproach.

1 Fig. 51.
2 Fig. 50.

The large drawers below are a veritable certificate of origin.

The subdivision of the doors of large cupboards into three panels by means of traverses—division into two panels also was to be known—was to become classic in subsequent periods. It was by no means a decorative fancy, but a necessity if those great doors were to be substantial, and especially to keep their shape.

If we examine attentively these two cupboards, with twist pillars, we will perceive the two ways in which these pillars were used. Sometimes a rectangular section was cut out of them all along their length, and they were glued on the arrises which fitted into the gap thus left in them[1]; sometimes they were left intact and fastened at top and bottom, but disengaged, standing in a place prepared for them by cutting away the upright for the purpose.[2]

We have said that cupboards in two parts served from the very beginning, and still serve, as buffets, either intact or reduced to the condition of under-cupboards (*bas d'armoires*) by the disappearance of the upper part. Then, from the end of the seventeenth century, under-cupboards in the Louis XIII style were made by themselves, and lastly, at an undetermined period, they sometimes had placed upon them *vaisseliers* or dressers with two or three shelves,

1 Fig. 50.

2 Fig. 51, also Figs. 37, 38, 40 and 44. This last method is much to be preferred.

surmounted by a moulded cornice.[1] Let us add, for the sake of completeness, that in the provinces, where the diamond point long remained in favour, we find *armoires d'encoignure*, later called *encoignures*, or corner cupboards, of triangular plan, dating from the eighteenth century.

Tables of the Louis XIII style that while simple are yet slightly ornamented, can hardly have been made before the second half of the seventeenth century, since the fashion up to that time was to have them hidden, during meals with tablecloths, at other times with tapestries that covered them down to the ground.[2] Those that really belong to the Louis XIII period—and there are practically none now surviving—have turned legs shaped like swollen pillars, all plain, and carried on a rectangular frame with stout cross-bars, on which the feet were set while one sat at table, because the chairs were very high. This frame was itself supported on four ball feet.

A little later tables were the proper and peculiar domain of the turners; here they displayed all the resources of their art. The legs were turned as plain pillars,[3] spirals,[4] *en chapelet*[5] (beaded), or baluster-shaped.[6] This last type can

1 Fig. 52.

2 We are not referring here, of course, to the show tables with tops of stone mosaic, or wood marquetry, or metal and tortoise-shell. There were no special dining-tables in existence any more than dining-rooms.

3 Figs. 56 and 57.

4 Figs. 53, 54, etc.

5 Fig. 62.

6 Figs. 58 to 61.

be by far the most elegant and graceful; we find some the outline of which is deliciously fine. The **H**-shaped stretcher is the most common; its cross-piece has in the middle either a simple ornament that forms an integral part of it,[1] or a vase, a knob or some other motive fastened upon it.[2] Some more complicated tables have, carried at the middle point of this cross-bar, a supplementary pillar-leg, and four long turned pieces (*candélabres*) fixed underneath the table properly so-called, and hanging down, like stalactites; this is a last memory of the arcadings that embellished the under-part of the fine Renaissance tables.

A gracefuller type, lighter of aspect and later in date, is the table with **X**-shaped stretcher,[3] which nearly always belongs to the period of Louis XIV. The curving branches of the **X** are cut out of a plank; their ends are not mortised into the *piliers*; they are carried by four flattened balls and support the legs in their turn. The intersection is adorned with a piece of turned work and sometimes rests upon a fifth foot in the shape of a ball.[4]

The most ornate tables of solid wood have the frieze carved with gadroons or arabesques; more frequently the quadrantal moulding of the top is incised with a running ornament of *demi-rosaces*; the front of the drawer, when it is of

1 Figs. 53 and 56.
2 Figs. 55, 58, 62.
3 Figs. 54 and 59.
4 Fig. 54.

a certain depth, may be decorated with raised panels, lozenge and triangle-shaped like those we have seen on cupboards.

The seventeenth century saw many varieties of tables, if not actually born, at least come into current use. As for their shape, they were almost all rectangular. At the same time, some were made round, oval, or octagonal. The round table, the shape of which, as everyone knows, has the advantage that it does away with all difficulties with regard to etiquette, is supposed to have become pretty common in Paris, in imitation of the one round which Mazarin used to assemble his guests. The oldest round table of carved and gilded wood that has come down to us,[1] is, they say, the last flotsam of Foucquet's furniture at Vaux-le-Vicomte.

To be able to diminish or increase the size of the table at pleasure, we saw that from the sixteenth century there had been *tables brisées*, or *tables ployantes*, and *tables qui se tirent*. We reproduce in Fig. 53 a small *table brisée* with two flaps, and in Fig. 57 the small hybrid piece, half bench and half low table—in short, a *basset brisé*—which an inventory of the time describes as follows : "a little walnut table which folds in three, iron-shod and set on a frame." The gaming table of Fig. 62 is a very curious piece : folding in three, its surface doubles when it is opened out ; it has a hole in the middle to hold a basin, meant to receive the stakes,

1 In the Louvre.

which is one of those platters of repoussé latten made in Germany and Flanders, the central decoration of which is so often, as in this case, the wonderful bunch of the grapes of Canaan carried by the two Hebrews.

Other folding tables have not only the top, but also the under-frame "*qui se brise*"; for example, the very pretty marquetry table with six legs seen in Fig. 60; unfortunately the photograph does not show the elegant rinceaux of inlaid wood that cover the top and edge of the table itself. The next plate (Fig. 61) shows a table with "broken frame," the two large flaps of which, when lifted up, more than treble the surface. Four of its baluster legs have been sawed down the middle, and the halves come together when the table is shut.

The *table s'allongeant*, or *table qui se tire par les deux bouts* or *table tirante*—and other names as well—was the *table à rallonges*, or extending table of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the sixteenth century the most magnificent were of this kind; those that date from the seventeenth are simpler and have a pronounced southern character. Four great baluster legs, sometimes diverging, are joined together at the bottom by a rectangular frame of stout cross-bars; they carry a thick top, often parquetted like a floor; two supplementary leaves are concealed under the first one; when these are pulled out, an arrangement of slanting grooves slides them up to the level of the fixed top, at

each end of which they come into place; the length of the table is not quite doubled in this fashion. Cabinet-makers and furniture dealers of to-day call these leaves *rallonges à l'italienne*.

An important invention of the joiners of this period was the bureau. Is it a specialised table? Or is it a transformation of the cabinet? It is both, and in any case this affiliation is of small moment. The *bureau* was first of all a stuff, a kind of *bure*; then a table cover made of it, next a table kept covered with such a cloth, and lastly a table specially made to write at conveniently, with drawers for the escritoire and papers. Cabinets being high in favour, a combination of cabinet and bureau was devised. Sully tells us in his *Memoirs*, "He (Henry IV) desired me to have made for him a kind of cabinet or large bureau elegantly wrought and entirely fitted with drawers all shutting with lock and key, and lined with crimson satin." Some of these very luxurious cabinet-bureaus have been preserved. The Cluny Museum has one, known as "Maréchal Créqui's bureau." This is a cabinet of very simple lines, quadrangular, with numerous drawers of marquetry on a background of tortoise-shell, sitting back on a table support fitted with larger drawers; the difference in the depth of the two parts permits of a writing desk in front. Another type, more akin to a table, if one may say so, has no cabinet above, but two series of superimposed drawers on either side of a space left for the legs of whoever sits down to

write; it is the direct ancestor of the "bureau ministre." This was known as a *bureau façon de table.*

We have still less to say about Louis XIII beds than about the beds of the sixteenth century; in the seventeenth they were more than ever, from the sub-basement to the vase-shaped knobs that adorned the corners of the tester, hidden and buried under an incredible pile of stuffs. Neither the more modest ones under their red serge, nor the most sumptuous, covered with *velours nuancé* with gold background, three-coloured damask, and other "*grandes estoffes*" edged with a "*passement luysant de Tours*,"[1] or, in summer time, with Dutch linen cloth with stripes of "*reseuil*,"[2] none of them showed as much as a square inch of wood. Thus they had no claim to be preserved; there have been none of them, so to speak, in existence for the last two centuries. It would be easy to make exact copies of them; but who would be willing to sleep in those hermetically sealed boxes of stuffs?

There remain the various forms of seats. And here there arises a small but irritating problem. What, in the first half of the seventeenth century, was a *fauteuil* and what was a *chaise à bras?* In the sixteenth century there was no difficulty; the *faudesteuil*, as we have seen, folded like pincers; the *chaise à bras* was rigid, square,

1 Coloured silk lace.
2 Guipure or embroidery on filet.

very high; the *caquetoire* was smaller and lighter. Under Louis XIV every chair with arms and a back is a *fauteuil;* but under Louis XIII— ? We find, in inventories and other contemporary documents, at one time *fauteuils* and at another *chaises à bras.* The most probable answer is that the *chaise à bras* had a high back, and the *fauteuil* a low back. And in fact we see, in an inventory of 1628, six "chaires a vertugadin" . . . four "*chaires . . . à dossier, façon de fauteuil,*" and three "chaires à bras et à dossier." But in many other cases no sign of any difference can be discovered.

Another difficulty presents itself when we turn over the collections of plates, invaluable in the highest degree for our knowledge of habits, costume and furniture under Louis XIII, that Abraham Bosse etched with a needle somewhat too proper and bourgeois, but exceedingly elegant. In none of the interiors he delineates with a great deal of fancifulness as regards architecture, and an evident exactness as to furniture, do we find a single chair with a high back. In 1661 arm-chairs with low backs were in no wise as yet superannuated; it was in this kind of chair that Louis XIV and Marie-Thérèse sat at their marriage ceremony. It seems likely enough that in the days of Henri IV it was perceived that the tall vertical back of the *chaire à bras* was the enemy of the huge ruffs and the great stiff collars the ladies wore; arm-chairs with low backs were made, at first alongside of the high

backed chairs, but from about 1625 they held the field alone. After Louis XIII the back became higher once more and at the same time more sloping, without the *fauteuil* losing its name, and after a short eclipse the *chaise à bras* was seen reappearing under this usurped name of *fauteuil*. But it was by that time already a Louis XIV seat.

The Louis XIII arm-chair, properly so called,[1] is then a seat with arms and a low back, stiff and poor in line, as must be confessed, square at all points, and the back very slightly or not at all sloped backwards. The legs of arm-chairs and "vertugadin" chairs were sometimes simple pillars standing on a square frame carried on four balls,[2] sometimes they were turned *en chapelet*,[3] *en spirale*,[4] or *en balustre*.[5] The back legs may well not be turned, for the sake of economy.[6] The cross-pieces of the stretchers are put together in the form of an **H**; nearly always there is a supplementary cross-piece joining the front legs above; this both strengthens and decorates at the same time. It should be noted that the legs have often been slightly shortened.[7] The period with which we are now concerned is the one in which chairs became gradually lowered to the

1 Figs. 63 to 65, 68.
2 Fig. 67.
3 Figs. 63 and 64.
4 Figs. 65, 69 and 70.
5 Figs. 68, 71 and 72.
6 Figs. 64, 69, 71, 72.
7 Figs. 63, 70. The same may be seen in tables (*cf.* Fig. 62) as the height of these was closely related to that of the seats.

height to which they rose again in the nineteenth century, after having been a trifle lower in the eighteenth.

The back is regularly rectangular, much less in height than in width ; the arms of arm-chairs are horizontal, turned like the legs, and rest upon *consoles d'accotoirs*[1] which are a continuation of the front legs ; they end in a simple turned button or, when there is a little carving, in a lion's head or ram's head. A motive that is far from rare is a female bust serving as the uppermost part of the console[2] ; the end of the arm is mortised into the back of the head.

The small arm-chair, loftily perched upon splaying legs, which allows a child to sit at an ordinary table,[3] then made its appearance, as well as the one with short legs on which it could sit down without help on the ground level.

About chairs there is nothing to be said ; they differ from the arm-chairs solely by the absence of arms[4] ; but it has become a habit to assign the Louis XIII style to large chairs with high backs completely covered and with seats now low[5] (about 35 centimetres) and now of ordinary height[6] (45 centimetres). To be quite truthful, it is exceed-

1 We are here anticipating a little in using this expression, which was to enter the joiners' vocabulary when this part of the arm-chair commonly presented the shape of an architectural console.

2 Fig. 65.

3 Fig. 66.

4 Figs. 67, 69, 70.

5 Fig. 71. These low chairs are called *chaufeuses ;* the word is quite modern.

6 Fig. 72.

ingly hard to decide their exact period; but it is very probable that this tall upholstered back with no space between it and the seat dates only from Louis XIV. The chair reproduced in Fig. 74 is a very pretty one, and very original. It is all of wood; the raw simplicity of the frieze and the top of the legs, while all the rest is finely carved, shows that it was meant to have a flat cushion with long fringes or valances; the back is merely an empty frame; it has been filled up, in the museum where the chair has found its last refuge, with a plain sheet of cardboard covered with velvet. In short, we have here a very refined variant of the humble wooden chair of the Lorraine peasants; the characteristic *accolade* shaping is found in the lower part of the back. This is an *escabelle à dos;* it was a very real and distinct kind of seat.

The ordinary *escabelle* in Fig. 73 is a very agreeable model; it is rather, from its height, a *basset*, that small piece with two ends, a seat on occasion, an occasional table at all times, the folding variety of which we have already seen. To come to an end of the kinds of seats without backs, there remains to be noticed the family of *tabourets* and *placets*, whose height varies between 20 and 50 centimetres, and among which even the lowest served to sit on as well as for a foot-rest.[1]

The rest-bed seems to have been invented about 1625 or 1630; we mention it here because

1 Figs. 77 and 78.

from its earliest days it commonly served as a seat. Mme. de Motteville, describing the arrest of the Prince de Conti, in 1650, writes: "The Prince de Conti did not say a word. He remained still seated on the small rest-bed that was in the gallery, and displayed neither fear nor vexation. . . ." And six years later, according to the great Mademoiselle, in the Château de Chilly, "the Queen of England sat upon a rest-bed, and her circle was larger than it had ever been, all the princesses and duchesses in Paris being in it." The rest-bed was made with either one or two *dossiers*, and with six or eight turned legs like the legs of arm-chairs. From it the *canapé* or sofa was to issue before long, meant mainly for sitting and, as a secondary use, for lying down; but it did not exist before the Louis XIV period. The *canapé* of Fig. 75 is interesting as evidence of the long survival of the Louis XIII style in middle-class furniture; the *manchettes* or arm cushions testify to the end of the reign of Louis XIV, perhaps even the Regency, as the date of its making.

The greatest change that took place with regard to seats in the seventeenth century was that on most of them the movable upholstery of square cushions, round cushions, and tapestry, was replaced by fixed upholstery nailed on to the frame-work. It was perhaps not so great an advance in comfort or ease as might be imagined, but it was a great advance in handiness in use.

The simplest form of *garniture* was made of a

thick ox hide, stretched on the frame of seat and back by means of big decorative nails with gilt brass heads. These seats, as we have said, were Spanish or Flemish in make, or indeed made in France in imitation of imported examples. Nothing can be more Spanish than this decoration of big nails; witness those that in the Peninsula adorn so many ancient church doors, and are sometimes real masterpieces of metal work. The hide was either plain,[1] or stamped with gilt tooling,[2] blind tooled, *escorchié*, *courtepointé*, as in the preceding period; the nails, of different sizes and shapes, lend themselves to very decorative combinations.[3]

Goat skin was not sufficiently thick or strong to be stretched by itself, without backing or support; but *courtepointé* leather was frequently morocco. The most sought after skins were bright red or yellow, and came from Asia Minor and Syria; they were grained in France, at Rouen in special. Red morocco was mounted with gilt nails, and yellow with silvered nails. It was not unusual to match a certain number of seats, arm-chairs, forms, tabourets, and later, a sofa, with a six-leaved screen, all in the same morocco, and this collection made up a "*meuble*."

1 Figs. 69 and 70.

2 Fig. 63. The decoration of this back is a classic: in the middle, armorial bearings with highly developed crest and lambrequins; around this a framing of rinceaux and in the corners four *fleurons*.

3 Figs. 63, 69 and 70.

Certain very magnificent seats had a gorgeous dress of the goffered leather, gilded and painted "in the Moorish style," that made such handsome wall coverings, especially in antechambers. This came from Spain, from Flanders, from Holland; it was made also in France.

But seats covered with morocco or gilded leather were most usually fitted in the same way as those done in stuffs. Upon an ox hide or on straps there was spread, not a regulation "*embourrure*" but a simple layer of horsehair, of no great thickness; on this there was stretched a stout canvas or sheep's leather,[1] and lastly the skin, the stuff, or the tapestry for the outer covering, which was nailed on either with *clous touchans*,[2] or with big nails spaced out on a galoon of gold or silver or silk; or again, small nails were grouped *en marguerites*,[3] daisy pattern, on this galoon.

All too often old seats have, in the nineteenth century, been fitted with the ugly modern garniture with springs; every amateur worthy of the name who becomes the owner of a chair or arm-chair thus disfigured will have it stripped of its springs and re-upholstered in the ancient manner; if it is a question of a rest-bed or a sofa, the movable mattress will be the only possible thing.

During a century, from 1570 to 1670, or

1 The phrase was "*un fauteuil garni de cuir, et couvert de velours.*"

2 Small nails touching one another.

3 Figs. 67, 69.

thereabouts, a great proportion of all seats, like the beds, were covered completely, including their legs, with a nailed-on stuff that was usually velvet; the wood of which they were made was common, rudely put together, and all, it goes without saying, have been destroyed. Such were the arm-chairs, in blue velvet covered with fleurs-de-lis, of Louis XIV and Marie-Thérèse we mentioned above. The great advantage of these upholstery trappings was that, for a ceremony to take place at a distance, such as that royal marriage in 1661 at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, they were carried along all prepared, and any joiner could knock up the wooden arm-chairs on which they were nailed. Taken off after the ceremony, they served again when a new occasion arose.[1]

Stuffs for seats were, in principle, the same as for beds. There was a bed in each of the important rooms of a suite, and a few seats matched this bed, in particular the arm-chairs ranged on either side of the alcove. We find recorded, for instance, "the seats and arm-chairs of the bed in crimson damask." The Cluny Museum possesses, almost intact, one of these suites, called in the old days "*emmeublements*,"[2] which have become excessively rare. The hangings of the bed (said to have belonged to the Maréchal d' Effiat; but

1 We find, in the Mazarin inventory, "Three *garnitures de fauteuils*, each composed of eleven pieces, covered with plain embroideries, two serving as back and valance and the others serving to cover all the wood of the arm-chair, etc."

2 A complete *emmeublement* included also stools, folding stools, square cushions, table covers, all in the same stuff.

we know how such ascriptions call for caution) are of crimson chased velvet and pink silk with appliqué embroideries, alternating in wide stripes; the arm-chairs are covered with the same two stuffs in compartments.

Seats were dressed also in stuffs of "plain" silks, that is to say, without pieces laid on or appliqué; plain and wrought velvets, damasks, satins, brocades, taffetas, *gros de Nables* and *de Tours*, and many others, and if they were of the simpler kinds, in moquette, Orléans or Aumale or Mouy serge, red, green or yellow. These stuffs were often embroidered, sometimes even *en plain*, so that they disappeared entirely under the stitchery of wool, silk, or gold; the Hungarian stitch, *à bastons rompus*, was in high favour. They were also *maniérées* with gold or silver cord—the modern word would be *soutachées*. Lastly, needlework tapestry, in coarse or fine stitch, or both combined, was patiently wrought in the various households, even the highest, even the King's, by women who, despite the progress of worldly life and manners, had long empty hours to fill in their homes.

The favourite motives for embroidery and needlework were large flowers and fruits done in natural colours. We know that the Jardin du Roi, the Jardin des Plantes of to-day, was expressly established under Henri IV, by the gardener Jean Robin and by Pierre Vallet, the king's embroiderer, to provide the embroiderers both male and female with new models inspired

by exotic plants. Gaston d'Orléans, the brother of Louis XIII, also had at Blois his garden of rare plants, which were drawn and engraved by Robert, his embroiderer and painter in ordinary.

To finish off these *garnitures* the compartments were outlined with galoons, the surfaces bedecked with lace, gold fringes and edgings hung around the seat and the lower part of the back, *frangeons* or *mollets** followed the other contours. Certain seats were even surrounded, in imitation of beds and tables, with a *jube*, or petticoat, composed of four valances of stuff that fell from the four sides of the frieze to the ground.

As several of these stuffs were extremely costly and very frail—white satins embroidered *au passé*, taffetas "dying-rose"-coloured, Venice brocatelles with flame-coloured background—and as the persons accustomed to make use of seats were excessively dirty [1]—however splendid they were to look at—armchairs and costly chairs were continually protected by loose covers. These were serge, or even in more lavish homes, such as Mazarin's, for instance, or Nicolas Foucquet's, or the Maréchal d'Humières', they

1 There are the fullest proofs of the incredible dirtiness of the people of the seventeenth century, even up to the very summit of the social scale. Héroard, the doctor to the Dauphin, the future Louis XIII, writes in his *Notes* about the young prince, under the date October 3, 1606: "At a quarter to nine, his clothes taken off." (This refers to the little Dauphin, then six years of age.) "His legs were washed in tepid water, in the Queen's basin: it was the first time." A manual of polite conduct, published in 1640, recommends its reader to wash "the hands every day, and the face nearly as often."

were made of silk stuffs such as velvet or taffeta of one plain colour, with gold galoon at the corners and fringes on the lower part. To take off the loose covers was *découvrir;* this was only done in well defined cases, and it was an important problem of etiquette to know for whom they were to be removed, and for whom they were not.

The reader may wonder perhaps that we do not mention here the seats whose backs were made of a narrow "caned" panel framed with very full pierced carvings, and whose seats also were caned, with the twist or console-shaped legs joined in front by a broad cross-piece covered with carving. In the old furniture trade, in many a sale catalogue and even in recent books on the French styles, they are called "Louis XIII." Now these chairs "*de bois de canne à jour*," as they were described, are neither French in origin or in spirit, but Flemish or Dutch, nor are they Louis XIII in period or in style. It was only at the very end of the seventeenth century that they were made in the Low Countries, then imported and finally imitated in France.

On the other hand, straw seats were common from the end of the sixteenth; but it appears that it was only towards 1660 that, thanks to the flat movable cushions or the silk loose covers with which they were provided, they found a place elsewhere than in convent cells or kitchens and offices, and that they were given a slightly

more refined structure. There are none in existence, so far as we know, which can claim date or style before the last years of the reign of Louis XIV. We are enabled to learn with complete exactness the fashion of such chairs in convents, from a picture by Philippe de Champaigne, the double portrait of Mother Catherine-Agnès Arnauld and Sister Catherine de Sainte-Suzanne; they are merely very ordinary kitchen chairs without the shadow of a style.

* * * * *

How can we to-day make use of Louis XIII furniture? In Paris, in those small bright boxes in which, with rare exceptions, we are reduced to living, and which all, alas! pretend to some vague eighteenth century style, it is very difficult to find a way of using them, for it is mostly large and sombre.

At the most we might make a homogeneous *ensemble* with, for instance, a walnut or ebony cabinet, or an under-cupboard, a cupboard in two parts if not over large, a table or two with twist or baluster legs, a few arm-chairs covered with hide, or with plain velvet, perhaps with old pieces of needlework tapestry, but *not* with those scraps of low-warp tapestry, known as "*verdure de Flandres*," with which dealers have for some years had a regular mania for furbishing them. The proper place for these verdures is, as far as possible, on the walls. In the seventeenth century no one had any scruple in fixing pictures

and mirrors on the tapestries by means of nails driven through them[1]; not yet were they hung by cords from the cornice. Mirrors and pictures must have wide and very simple frames, made of dark walnut or ebony with wavy mouldings. For lighting there must be an old Dutch lustre with a big brass ball; on the floor one or several carpets, oriental, of course; they have never ceased to figure in French interiors from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth; whether ancient or modern, they do not "date," and accommodate themselves to the neighbourhood of every style. To make this severe ensemble a little brighter we may place here and there, still remaining scrupulously "within the note of the period," all the Eastern and Far-Eastern objects we please; already they were being collected in the days of Richelieu and Mazarin, and more than one shop of "Chinese wares" in the galleries of the Palace set out its quaint baubles among the booksellers' quartos and the Venetian guipures of the lace vendors. Add a dish or two of Manisès faïence with the ruddy coppery sheen; they were sought out by the name of *porcelaine dorée;* lastly a bottle, a *cornet*, or a plaque in delft; always under the name of *porcelaines*, the admirable pottery of Abraham de Kooge and Albrecht de Keiser and their fellows gleamed with all the lustre of their incomparable glaze in all the houses that had any claim to elegance in 1650.

1 Abraham Bosse's engravings prove this to the full.

But the real place for these old pieces is a huge provincial mansion—there they will be a marve of fitness. They are accused of gloominess. Oh, of course, they have none of the gay smartness of the Louis XV *bonheurs du jour* and *bergères*. But the light smiles and twinkles more than one thinks upon their polished wood; everywhere it clings in dancing sparkles to the high points of the turned parts, and the facets of diamond-point mouldings kindle geometrical lights in the very darkest corners. The walnut of cupboards and tables sometimes remained light in colour, and many were fashioned out of cherry-wood that with the lapse of time has taken on a warmth of tone rivalling mahogany.

In the ancestral home of many an old Gascon family there is an imposing Louis XIII cupboard in two parts, serving as dining-room buffet for the last two centuries, while an under-cupboard with facetted decoration plays the part of service table. It would not be very difficult to complete a set by adding to these a massive table "pulling out by the ends"; this will come from another province, but that will be of no great consequence. Chairs or even armchairs with twist legs, very simple ones, will make good table seats; their rather pinched lines and low backs will not make serving difficult. It will not be easy to find a certain number of these seats all alike. But nothing in the world—and the dealers know this only too well!—is so readily copied as a Louis XIII table or chair; in the work of the

lathe there is always something mechanical and impersonal that allows absolute exactness in reproduction, while a piece of carved work is almost quite beyond imitation. Here again, a Dutch lustre in the ceiling, and Flemish *verdures* on the walls. We must not imagine that in this way we shall have a faithful restoration of a dining-room of 1650, since at that moment there were no dining-rooms, and every meal was taken in one of those rooms-of-all-work, the main piece of furniture in which was a bed.

Neither were there any "drawing-rooms." A strictly Louis XIII drawing-room, therefore, cannot be. One single point of comfort would suffice to make it impossible; the seats of the period were far too unwieldy and uncomfortable. But isolated pieces of furniture belonging to our style can be mixed without clashing with Louis XIV pieces, since in strict reality they are not two different styles; and we can see quite reasonably in the great drawing-room or the living hall of a big mansion or a simple country house, a grandiose cupboard with diamond-point decoration and spiral pillars, and tables, with carafe-baluster legs; while in a smoking-room, serving as a cabinet for tobacco, liqueurs, the paraphernalia of bridge, even side by side with comfortable deep English arm-chairs in morocco leather, what could be better than a pretty little cupboard in two parts like those shown in our Figs. 37 and 38?

FIG. 1. COFFER WITH FENESTRATIONS OR "ORBE-VOIES," IN OAK

FIG. 2. COFFER WITH FENESTRATIONS AND PILLARS, IN OAK

FIG. 3. BUFFET WITH CANT CORNERS, IRON FITTINGS "A ORBE-VOIES."

FIG. 4. CHAIR WITH CARVED "SERVIETTE" OR "PARCHEMINS REPLIÉS" DECORATIONS (LINENFOLD)

FIG. 5. CHAIR WITH COFFER SEAT, "A CLAIRES-VOIES" AND "ORBE-VOIES," IN OAK. FIFTEENTH CENTURY

FIG. 6. VERY LARGE CHAIR WITH COFFER SEAT, WITH "ORBE-VOIES" AND "PARCHEMINS SIMPLES," IN OAK. FIFTEENTH CENTURY

FIG. 7. SMALL BENCH WITH OPENED END PIECES

FIG. 8. COFFER FROM LORRAINE WITH ENTRELACS, OAK. SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

FIG. 9. COFFER WITH SMALL PANELS, WALNUT INLAID WITH YELLOW WOOD. MIDDLE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

FIG. 10. COFFER WITH MEDALLION DECORATION. MIDDLE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

FIG. 11. NORMAN COFFER WITH CARYATIDS, OAK. END OF THE STYLE.

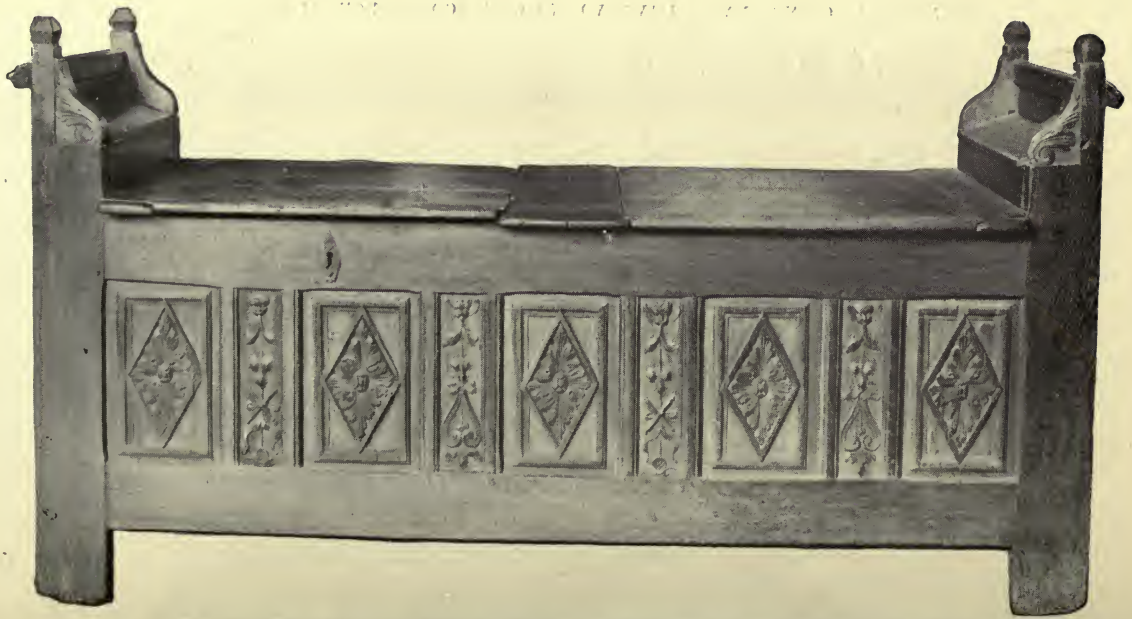

FIG. 12. "ARCHEBANC-COUCHETTE," IN OAK. MIDDLE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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FIG. 13. CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS, FROM BURGUNDY, WALNUT. END OF THE STYLE.

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Two offers, one on left of the other — see

FIG. 14. SMALL CUPBOARD, OF WALNUT INLAID WITH MARBLE, IN THE STYLE OF THE ILE-DE-FRANCE. PERIOD OF HENRI III.

56,167

Louis XIII cabaret - 56 &

FIG. 15. CUPBOARD WITH LONG PILLARS, WALNUT.
PERIOD OF HENRI III.

FIG. 16. BUFFET CARVED WITH GROTESQUES, OAK.
PERIOD OF FRANCOIS I.

516.52

FIG. 17. LARGE BUFFET WITH PILASTERS, WALNUT

ed q xvi cent 6556

FIG. 18. EXPANDING TABLE, WALNUT

FIG. 19. SMALL TABLE WITH FIXED TRESTLE LEGS CARVED WITH GRIFFONS, IN WALNUT

FIG. 20. TABLE WITH SIX LEGS WALNUT INLAID WITH FILLETS OF LIGHT COLOURED WOOD. END OF THE STYLE

FIG. 21. CHAIR WITH COFFER SEAT, IN WALNUT. SECOND HALF OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

FIGS. 22 AND 23. "CAQUETOIRES" OR SMALL CHAIRS WITH ARMS, WITH MEDALLION DECORATIONS

FIG. 24. "CAQUETOIRE" WITH BALUSTERS

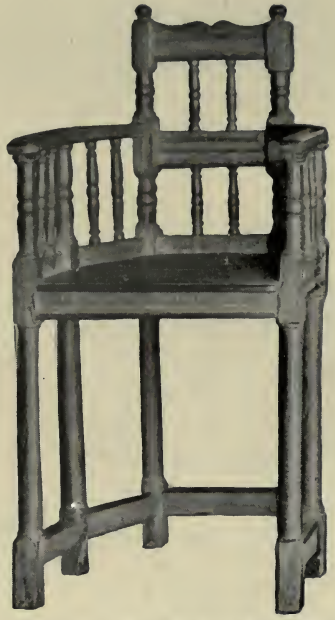

FIG. 25. "CAQUETOIRE" WITH VERY HIGH SEAT

FIG. 26. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR, IN CHASED VELVET.
END OF THE STYLE

FIG. 27. "CAQUETOIRE" WITH SCROLL ARMS.
END OF THE STYLE

FIG. 28. "CAQUETOIRE GARNIE" WITH CONSOLES

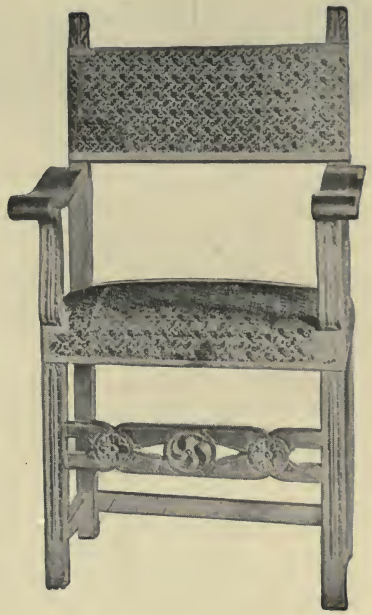

FIG. 29. "CAQUETOIRE GARNIE" WITH PLUME DECORATION

FIG. 30. CHAIR WITH ARMS, IN THE SPANISH-FLEMISH STYLE, GILDED LEATHER. REIGN OF HENRI IV

FIG. 31. SMALL NORMAN COFFER ON ITS STAND, IN OAK.
LOUIS XIII STYLE

FIG. 32. CUPBOARD WITH FOUR DOORS AND SMALL PANELS, ON ITS STAND. NORMANDY, BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

FIG. 33. LARGE CUPBOARD WITH FOUR DOORS AND SMALL PANELS, IN WALNUT. BEGINNING OF THE STYLE

FIG. 34. SMALL CUPBOARD WITH TWO DOORS, OAK AND WALNUT. DATED 1659 (MODERN METALWORK)

FIG. 35. CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS FROM THE COUNTY OF MONTBÉLIARD IN OAK

FIG. 36. LARGE CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS, WALNUT. BEGINNING OF THE STYLE, WITHOUT ITS PEDIMENT

FIG. 37. SMALL CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS, WITH TWO DRAWERS, IN WALNUT

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FIG. 38. SMALL CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS WITH EAGLE FEET, IN WALNUT

FIG. 39. CABINET OR BUFFET WITH BALUSTERS AND PLUMES, IN WALNUT

Carafe baluster 129

FIG 40. CABINET IN TWO PARTS WITH CORNICE AND "POINTES DE GATEAU" DECORATION, IN WALNUT

FIG. 41. GASCON CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS, ELABORATELY CARVED, WALNUT

FIG. 42. GASCON CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS WITH INTERRUPTED PEDIMENT

FIG. 43. GASCON CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS IN WALNUT
(MODERN PEDIMENT)

FIG. 44. VERY LARGE GASCON CUPBOARD WITH CORNICE AND DISENGAGED PILLARS, IN WALNUT

pointe de gateau

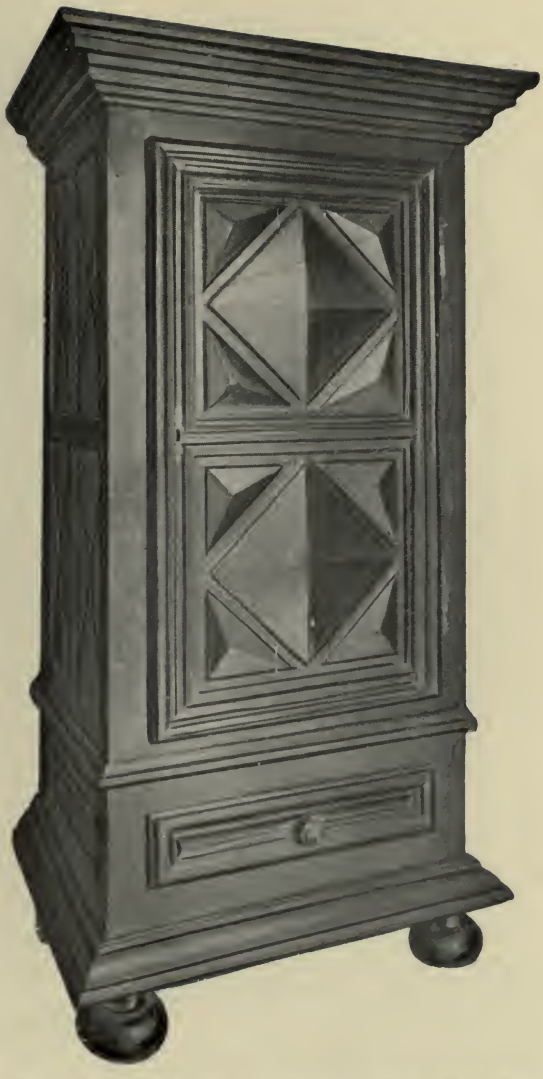

FIG. 45. GASCONY CUPBOARD WITH DIAMOND POINT DECORATION, WALNUT

FIG. 46. CUPBOARD WITH ONE DOOR WITH FLAT DIAMOND POINTS AND CIRCULAR MOTIVES, IN CHERRYWOOD

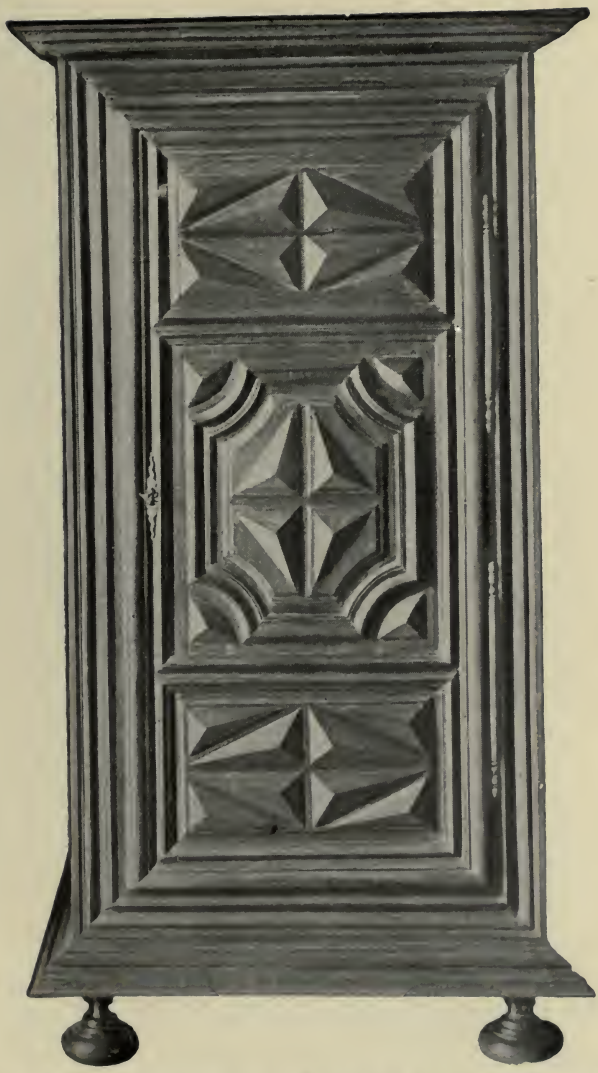

FIG. 47. SMALL CUPBOARD IN ONE PIECE, FROM BURGUNDY, WITH DIAMOND POINTS, IN OAK

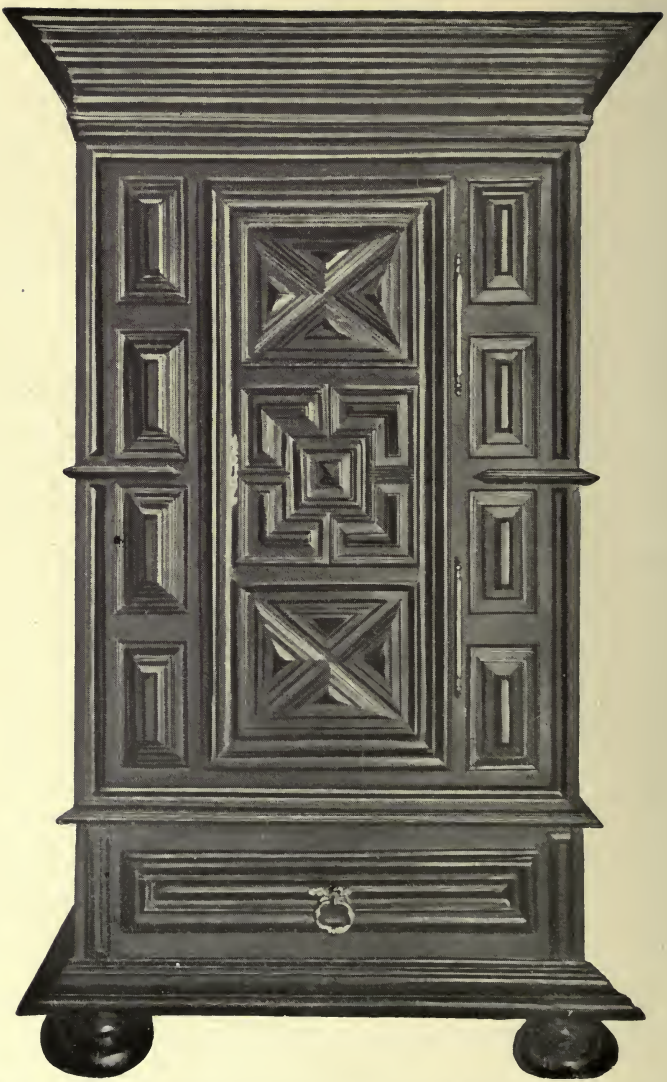

FIG. 48. GASCON CUPBOARD WITH LARGE CORNICE, IN WALNUT, PARTLY PAINTED BLACK

FIG. 49. LARGE BURGUNDIAN CUPBOARD WITH DIAMOND POINTS, IN WALNUT

FIG. 50. VERY LARGE GASCON CUPBOARD WITH DIAMOND POINTS AND TWIST ENGAGED PILLARS

115.526

FIG. 51. LARGE GASCON CUPBOARD WITH DETACHED PILLARS

115, 126

FIG. 52. GASCON "BUFFET A VAISSELIER" (DRESSER BUFFET) WALNUT,

FIG. 53. TABLE WITH TWO FLAPS AND TWIST LEGS, IN WALNUT

FIG. 54. TABLE WITH MOULDING ON DRAWER AND TWIST LEGS, IN WALNUT

FIG. 55. BURGUNDIAN TABLE, IN WALNUT

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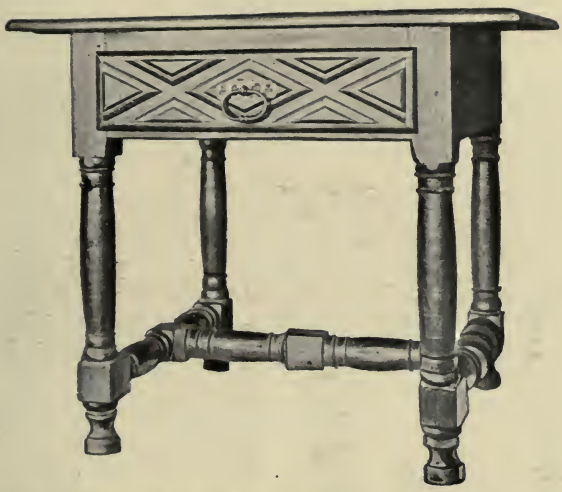

FIG. 56. SMALL TABLE WITH ORNATE DRAWER, IN WALNUT

FIG. 57. BASSET OR SMALL FOLDING TABLE-ESCABEAU, IN WALNUT

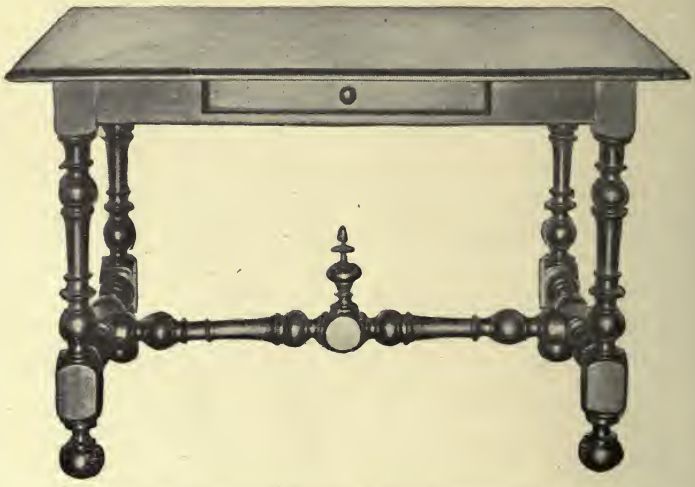

FIG. 58. CHERRYWOOD TABLE WITH TURNED BALUSTERS

FIG. 59. TURNED TABLE FROM PROVENCE WITH X-SHAPED STRETCHER, IN WALNUT

129 X stretcher nearly always belongs to Louis XIV.

FIG. 60. FOLDING TABLE WITH FOLDING UNDER-FRAME, COLOURED WOOD MARQUETRY

FIG. 61. LARGE TABLE WITH FOLDING UNDER-FRAME, IN OAK

FIG. 62. LARGE FOLDING GAMING TABLE, IN WALNUT

FIG. 63. ARM-CHAIR WITH CARVED BUSTS

FIG. 64. ARM-CHAIR WITH BEAD TURNINGS
MODERN COVER

FIG. 65. ARM-CHAIR WITH BEAD TURNINGS, IN LEATHER, ORIGINALLY GILDED

FIG. 66. CHILD'S ARM-CHAIR WITH BALUSTER TURNINGS

FIG. 67. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR COVERED IN CHASED VELVET

FIG. 68. ARM-CHAIR WITH BALUSTER TURNINGS

FIG. 69. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR WITH BEAD TURNINGS, UPHOLSTERED IN LEATHER

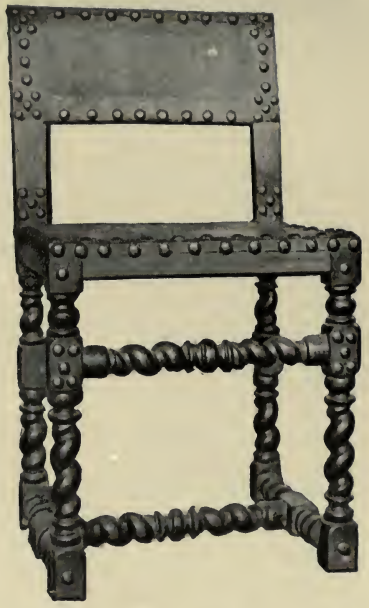

FIG. 70. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR WITH TWIST LEGS STRETCHED WITH LEATHER

FIG. 71. LOW CHAIR WITH HIGH BACK, IN MODERN NEEDLEWORK TAPESTRY

FIG. 72. CHAIR WITH BALUSTER TURNINGS, IN MODERN NEEDLEWORK TAPESTRY

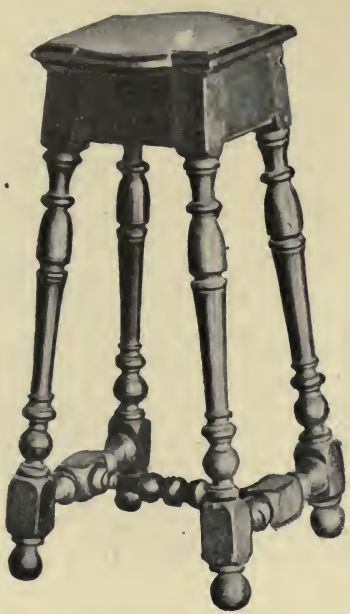

FIG. 73. BASSET STOOL WITH BALUSTER TURNINGS

FIG. 74. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR WITH MOVABLE CUSHIONS

FIG. 75. SOFA, LOUIS XIV PERIOD, MODERN NEEDLEWORK TAPESTRY

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